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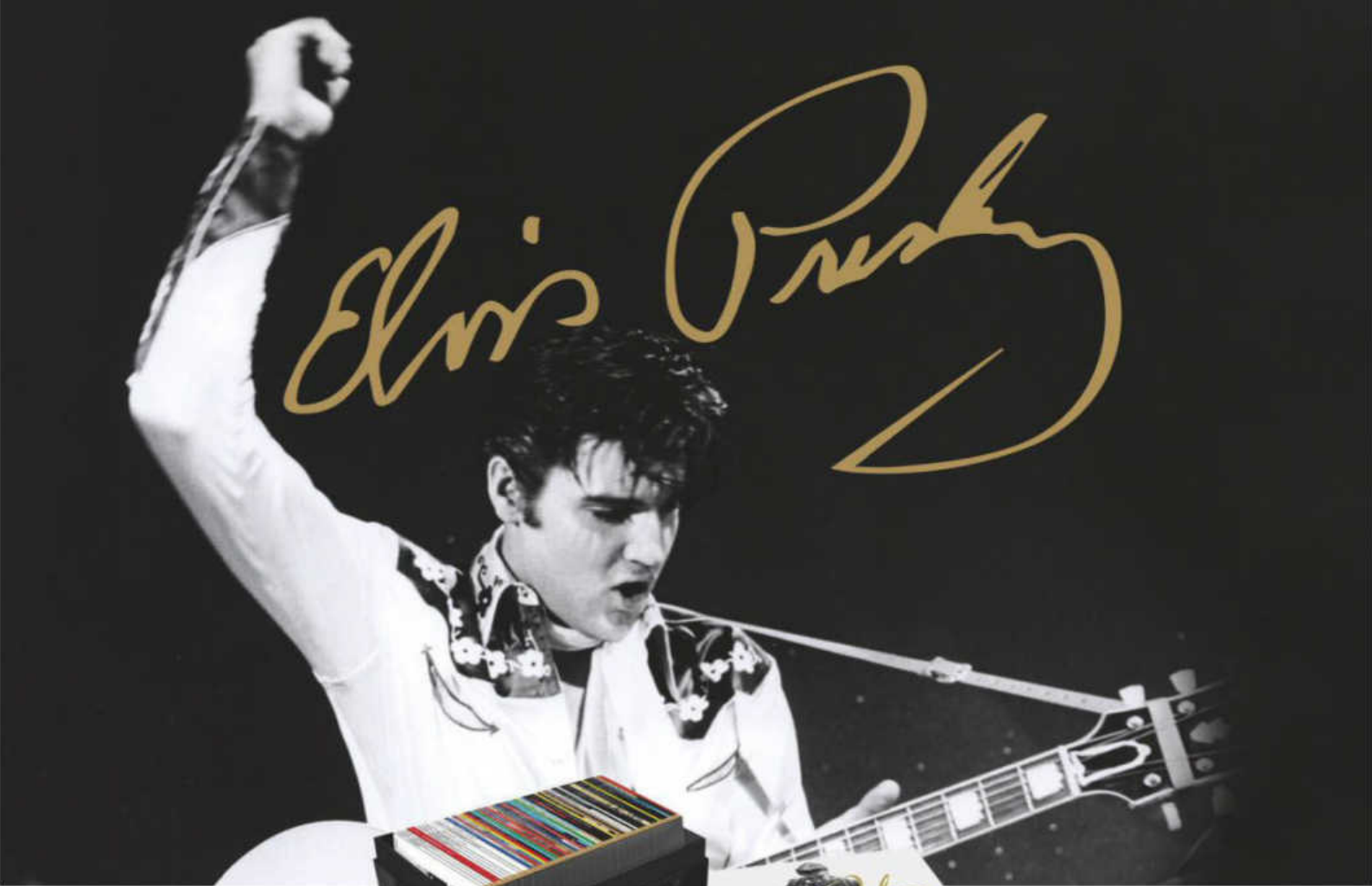
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Bobby Gillespie

Are we rolling?

GIVEN THE CONTROVERSY that our recent Top 200 Albums Of All Time list seems to have caused, I guess I should be wary of using the words "Greatest" and "Ever" in too close proximity to one another. Still, working on this issue of *Uncut*, I've been reminded that whenever I'm asked about the greatest gigs I've ever seen, I always mention a night spent with Jeff Buckley in 1994.



In the 1960s, Bunjie's coffee bar, just off London's Charing Cross Road, was a hang-out for Dylan and Paul Simon. By the mid '90s, the subterranean nook was an anachronism, but on March 18, 1994, it hosted one last legendary show. Enthralled by an advance copy of Jeff Buckley's debut EP, "Live At Sin-é", I'd travelled to New York the previous month to catch one of his solo shows, and been stunned by what I saw. When he fetched up on this side of the Atlantic in mid-March, I suppose I stalked the poor guy.

On March 15, Buckley played a short support set to a few amazed insiders at the Borderline. Two days later, aesthetes were virtually scrapping to get into a claustrophobic show Upstairs At The Garage

where, legend has it, John McEnroe carried Buckley's amp. The next night found Buckley in Bunjie's cellar, distributing white roses to the lucky few of us who'd managed to scam our way in. Bunjie's was too hardcore to bother with mics, and the somersaulting range of Buckley's voice was more apparent than ever.

He played for an hour or so, and wanted to play longer, but the venue was closing. Then someone came in and said he could carry on at the 12-Bar, another muso club just down the road. Buckley marched out of the club carrying his guitar, and we all followed him with our roses. Even at the time, it felt like we were living out a romantic fantasy. At the 12-Bar, Buckley tried to play every song he'd ever heard: The Smiths, Led Zeppelin, some heartfelt Liz Frazer and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan impressions, until he pretty much had to be carried off the stage.

There have been times when I've questioned my memories of the whole evening, which is one of the reasons I'm thankful for the arrival of a new Buckley collection, *You And I*, and Graeme Thomson's feature about it. Many of the songs that Buckley played at the 12-Bar turn up on *You And I*, dating from a February 1993 recording session in New York.

"I was sucked in by his voice and guitar playing," his A&R man, Steve Berkowitz, tells Graeme. "The way he was singing and playing these songs, which were mostly covers, seemed fully orchestrated. Yet it was casually done, it seemed spontaneous and unrehearsed."

He believed, I suppose, his time had come...

John Mulvey

John Mulvey, Editor. Follow me on Twitter @JohnRMulvey

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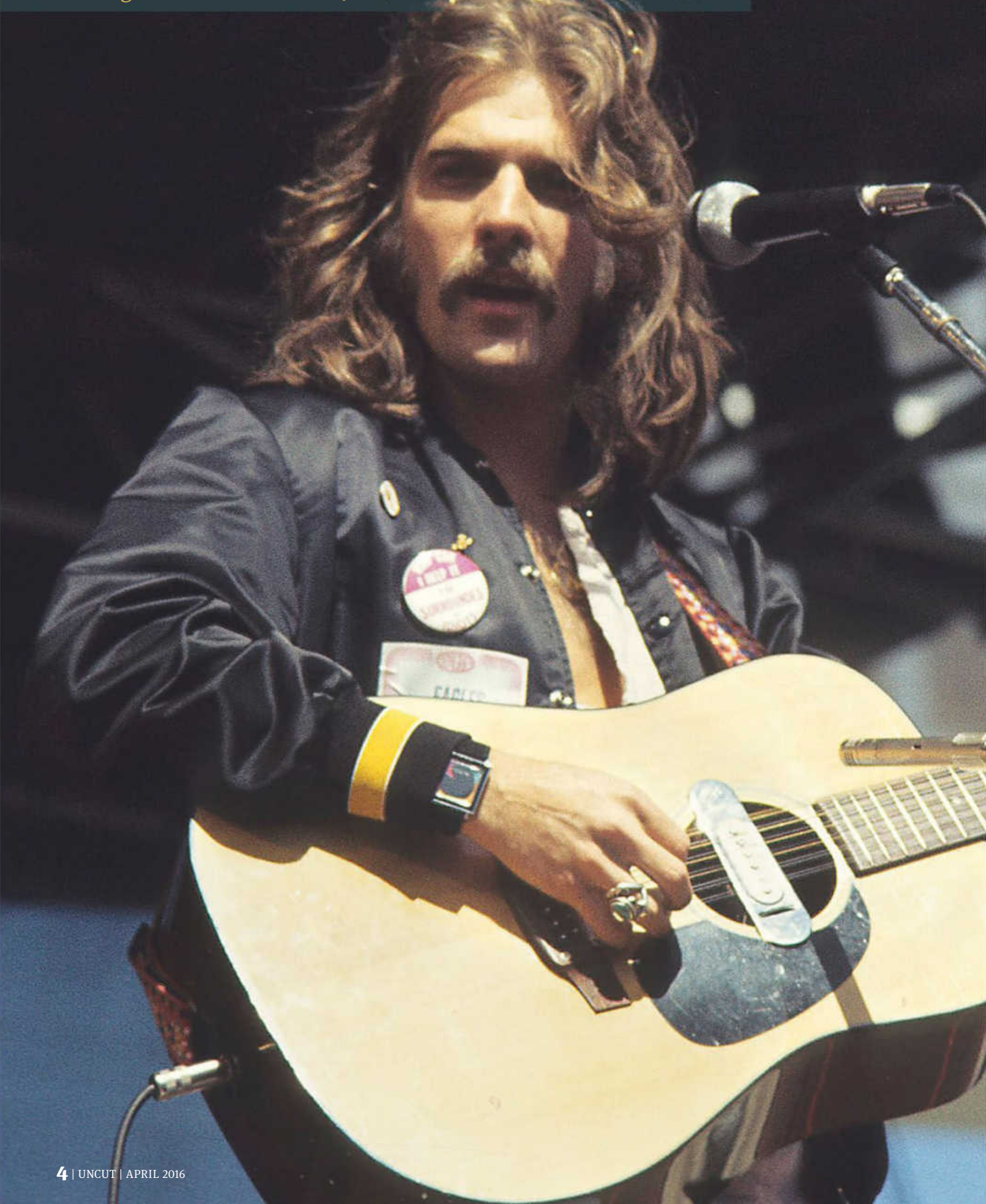
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THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring CHARLES BRADLEY | DAVID LITVINOFF | KIRAN LEONARD



TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT...

GLENN FREY (1948-2016)

The indefatigable Eagle remembered by JD Souther, Don Felder and more: "We all looked to him for direction."

GLENN FREY WASN'T the first aspiring songwriter to be drawn to California in the 1960s, but he made his mark more emphatically than most. Arriving in LA from Michigan in 1969, aged 20, Frey met fellow Detroit native JD Souther and began gigging at the Troubadour as country-folk duo Longbranch Pennywhistle. The downstairs neighbour in their Echo Park apartment, meanwhile, was another young hopeful, Jackson Browne.

Longbranch Pennywhistle's debut LP tanked, yet it was the start of a songwriting coalition that fed directly into Frey's next project. In 1971, Souther recommended Frey to his girlfriend, Linda Ronstadt, then on the lookout for a backing band. Frey hit it off immediately with her drummer, Don Henley, whom he'd first bumped into at the Troubadour. The pair swiftly set about forming what became The Eagles, with the addition of Bernie Leadon and Randy Meisner, and began rehearsing at Ronstadt's place. "Glenn and I had broken up as a duo only months before," recalls Souther now, who continued to collaborate with The Eagles, "but they already sounded like a fantastic four-piece band. Don and Glenn really

planned and executed that thing perfectly. I viewed The Eagles as a *fait accompli* – they were always going to tour their butts off and make the right records. These seamless, beautiful records. And we all made each other better musicians and songwriters."

One of the first acts signed to David Geffen's Asylum label, The Eagles scored an instant hit with 1972's debut single "Take It Easy", co-written by Frey and Browne. It was the beginning of an intense, often combustible, career that saw the band define the soft-rock epoch of '70s California in much the same way as The Beach Boys had embodied the previous decade. "Glenn was the one who started it all," said Henley in a statement,

released after Frey died in January of complications from rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis and pneumonia. "He was the spark plug, the man with the plan. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of popular music and a work ethic that wouldn't quit. He was funny, bull-headed, mercurial, generous, deeply talented and driven."

The bedrock of The Eagles' commercial success was their ability to absorb the smooth harmonies of country music and roll them out for a rock audience, sweetened by deft melodies and glassy guitar hooks. Under Frey's stewardship, the band diligently scaled up the SoCal sound for a global audience, peaking with 1976's *Hotel California*. At the last count, the album has sold in excess of 32 million copies. "Glenn was by far the leader of the band," recalls guitarist

Don Felder, who joined The Eagles in 1974.

"We all looked to him for direction. He was a great organiser and just kind of ran the show. He also had a great sense of humour and was really fun to write with, as far as song conceptualisation. Glenn had a brilliant gift for being able to see the picture of what the song should be and then break it down scene by scene, verse by verse. The

combination of his perspective and Henley's literary skills, and different people's musical beds underneath, was a magical one."

Frey's gift for shaping The Eagles' songs led his bandmates to dub him 'The Lone Arranger'. This brought with it a wider vision. "All those images synonymous with California – palm trees, sandy beaches, bikinis, movie stars, Hollywood Boulevard – had run through our minds when each of us had first made our way to the West Coast," adds Felder, who co-wrote *Hotel California*'s title track with Frey and Henley. "So Glenn started talking about how we could use that concept as a framework for the album. The foundation for a lot of the songs on *Hotel California* developed from Glenn's initial

"Glenn just kind of ran the show. He was stacked with aces from every suit that you could name"

DON FELDER

idea, whether it was 'New Kid In Town' or 'Life In The Fast Lane'."

After The Eagles split in July 1980, undermined by in-fighting, drugs and warring egos, Frey went solo. "The One You Love" gave him a *Billboard* Top 20 hit two years later, though it wasn't until 1984's kinetic "The Heat Is On" that he achieved major international success. The song, written by Keith Forsey and Harold Faltermeyer, was a populist highlight of the soundtrack to *Beverly Hills Cop*. "The Eagles were saying that they wouldn't get back together until hell freezes over, so Glenn needed success as a solo artist," remembers Faltermeyer. "He was really into the song and actually ended up playing the guitar solo. He was rock'n'roll, the easiest guy on earth. One of his favourite hangouts was across the street from the Paramount lot, at the Formosa Café, so we'd go over there for a pitcher of margaritas and then get back to work. 'The Heat Is On' helped him a lot. He was on a flight to a different world."

Other hits soon followed. Chief among them were "Smuggler's Blues" and "You Belong To

BEYOND COOL



Blowing minds: Don Cheadle as Miles Davis



Timothy B. Schmit, Don Henley, Glenn Frey and Joe Walsh at the *History Of The Eagles Part 1* documentary announcement during the 2013 Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah, January 19, 2013

The City", both of which were recorded for *Miami Vice*, the TV series that saw Frey branch out into acting with the part of recurring character Jimmy Cole. By the time The Eagles did indeed reunite for 1994's drolly titled live effort *Hell Freezes Over*, Frey had issued four solo LPs and a clutch of successful 45s. He toasted the band's reunion on stage by telling the audience: "For the record, we never broke up. We just took a 14-year vacation."

It was the signal for a fresh round of sporadic jaunts that culminated in the *History Of The Eagles* tour, a companion piece to the titular *Showtime* documentary that aired in 2013. The band's two-year global trek, which came to a close last summer, netted them a tidy \$86 million in 2014 alone. The Eagles were due to pick up an award at the annual Kennedy Center Honors in December, but asked for it to be postponed until Frey was fit to attend. Alas, it wasn't to be.

"For the most part, Glenn was a delightful guy to have spent 27 years in a band with," concludes Felder, who had hoped for a reconciliation with Frey after the pair were involved in legal wrangles during the Noughties. "He was a multi-talented writer, arranger, performer and a great guitar player. He was just stacked with aces from every suit that you could name. Glenn was everything that you'd want in a band."

ROBHUGHES

IN A SILENT (MOVIE) WAY

Upfront of his Miles Davis biopic, DON CHEADLE gets up with *Uncut* – and Kenny G!

DON CHEADLE WAS 10 when he was first introduced to Miles Davis' music. "My parents had copies of *Kind Of Blue* and *Porgy And Bess*," he tells *Uncut*. "I used to listen to those LPs all the time; especially *Porgy And Bess*. Because it's based on Gershwin, it's very theatrical and expressive. It felt like it was telling a story. Starting out as an actor at that age, those two things dovetailed together. It was going somewhere."

It took 40 years for Cheadle to catch up again to Davis. The result is *Miles Ahead* – a film in which Cheadle not only stars as Davis but also directs. As with its subject, *Miles Ahead* has its own mercurial style. Set largely in the late '70s, when Davis withdrew both from the concert stage and from the recording studio, it cuts away to show Davis' earlier career in the late 1950s and his courtship of dancer Frances Taylor (Emayatzy Corinealdi), his first wife. There is also a fabricated subplot involving the hunt for stolen studio tapes that is closer to caper movie than conventional biopic.

"We didn't want it to be a stuffy, cradle-to-the-grave film; the Greatest Hits of Miles Davis' life," explains Cheadle. "The '70s became the departure point for us. How did this incredibly prolific artist, who had changed music three or four times, go silent for five years? What's happening? How do you get out of that? You start the movie when he's not playing and it makes you lean in and say,

'What? We're going to listen to you *not* play?'

"The period between when he met Frances and when she was running out of the door for her life was the period when he took *Kind Of Blue* and went from that first supergroup with Coltrane, Cannonball and Wynton Kelly to the second supergroup. He went everywhere those songs could possibly take him, then never playing any of them again."

One useful comparison to *Miles Ahead* may well be *Love & Mercy*, the Brian Wilson drama that similarly focused on two specific periods in its subject's life. Both films depicted the hard construction work that goes into creating art: in *Miles Ahead*, Cheadle takes us inside the *Porgy And Bess* sessions. "One of the questions we had as we were putting the film together was, 'How do you show genius, quote unquote?'" admits Cheadle, who learned to play trumpet for the film. "We went in there and acted like musicians, played it, figured it out and just recorded the session."

How would Cheadle describe the film's two Davises – the 1950s and 1970s versions? "It's not just binary," he counters. "It was modal. It was like, this is now and that was then. You see similar things in both times. The fragile nature of what he's dealing with: his jealousy, his fear of losing, the rage that inspires."

Did you ever meet Davis?

"No, I saw him perform at Red Rocks, in Denver, Colorado, when I was a senior in high school, in 1982," reveals Cheadle. "But I met Kenny G that night. Though that's not exactly the same thing as meeting Miles Davis, right?"

MICHAEL BONNER

"We didn't want it to be a stuffy, cradle-to-the-grave film"
DON CHEADLE

Miles Ahead is released in the UK in April

I'M NEW HERE

Once I Was An Eagle

He turns Black Sabbath tunes into deep soul! He makes tofu taste like chicken! Is there no end to the talents of CHARLES BRADLEY?

SIXTY-SEVEN YEAR old soulman Charles Bradley has offered to cook *Uncut* lunch. "What do you eat? I've been a Chinese cook, an American cook, I've done Italian cooking, I've cooked Greek food... My mom, she loved me to make a chicken à la king with hot homemade biscuits. Even if you don't eat no meat, I can still take me some mushrooms, some tofu, put my flavours in it, and you would swear to god you're eating chicken..."

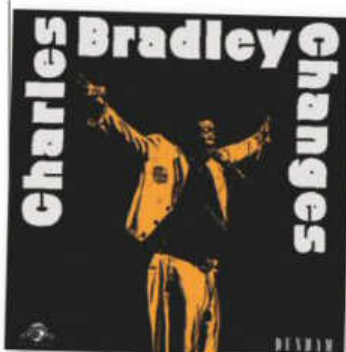
Meet the Florida-born singer with the most righteous voice – and recipe book – in soul music. The Screaming Eagle Of Soul's backstory is literally the stuff of movies: 2012's *Soul Of America* chronicles time served, from leaving home at 14, training as a chef in the Job Corps, losing his handmates to the Vietnam draft, via family tragedy, jail time, and life on the road as a James Brown impersonator, "Black Velvet". It was there he caught the eye of Daptone boss Gabriel Roth, and the fit with the soul-revivalist label is clear. Bradley's racked roar burns with authenticity.

Like other musicians who have found a platform later in life, he would rather look forward than back: "Honestly, life now is bittersweet" – a word he uses a number of times during our

conversation. "I say that because it took so long for the world to accept me. I've been out there singing James Brown, Otis Redding and making people happy, but only now is it about the true voice of Charles Bradley. I look into people's faces and see how their spirit catches my music. Some people never find that moment, but I found mine."

This spring sees the release of his third album, *Changes*, for

"I can even do Neil Young's 'Heart Of Gold', but I kinda make it mine..."



Charles Bradley: "It took so long for the world to accept me"

Daptone, and its title track and inspiration come from a surprising source. In Bradley's hands, the Black Sabbath song, Ozzy's signature tune, becomes a deep soul masterpiece. "It reminds me of the day my mom left me. I listened to the Black Sabbath album a lot around that time... and when I listen to that last part, I can still hear her last goodbye: 'All my days have turned to tears/Wish I could go back and change these years.' That emotion, those words..." It's the calling card for a boneshaking soul album, from the upbeat "Ain't It A Sin" to the funky melodrama of "God Bless America/Good To Be Back Home".

After a string of US dates, late March sees his tour hit Europe, including the Kentish Town Forum, Bristol's Colston Hall and that venue of soul legends past, L'Olympia, Paris. "I always tell everybody Europe is truly where I got my start. Now I'm getting respect in the United States, but I had to go to Europe and sing my heart out first!"

Onstage, Bradley brings the intensity, energy and stagecraft you'd expect from someone with that peerless nickname, coined by

Daptone labelmates The Budos Band. "I'm always making my own stage clothes. I had this heavy T-shirt with a big eagle on the back of it, and I cut it out and I sewed it on the back of my black jumpsuit, with all these little pizzazz things on it. When I went onstage and starting dancing and went crazy, they said: 'Man, that's a screaming eagle of soul!'"

Like his food, Bradley's shows are about pleasing the customers. "I want everybody to see me sing. My musical friends say you gotta get away from James Brown... I say I can't get away from my roots. Don't make me be a robot! I wanna be free to get out there and feed the audience what they want. If they wanna hear a little bit of James Brown, hey, I'm gonna give them James Brown. If they wanna hear a little hit of Otis Redding, well, hey..."

"I can even do Neil Young. I actually do 'Heart Of Gold', but I kinda make it mine..."

MARK BENTLEY

Changes is released April 1 on Daptone/Dunham. **Charles Bradley** plays London O2 Forum (March 30), Bristol Colston Hall (April 15) and Gateshead Sage (17)

MARK SHAW

THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: Synth nights with Stevo on the Kings Road, and the Bunnymen headline a post-punk mega-gig at the Lyceum. From NME, March 8, 1980

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A QUICK ONE

► This month's offerings from *Uncut*'s publishing empire include the latest *History Of Rock*, focusing on 1972 and featuring – of course – David Bowie on the cover. Also, we've a deluxe upgraded version of *Ultimate Music Guide* to The Who back in the shops, and a Beach Boys *Ultimate Music Guide* on the way.



► The latest '90s indie sweethearts to reform are Tanya Donnelly's Belly. Dates are impending in the US and UK, and their website promises "a handful of brand new Belly songs in various stages of writing and recording, that we'll be releasing one by one over the next few months."

► A year on from his death, Daavid Allen's last recordings are set for release. *Eleven* is credited to the Daavid Allen Weird Quartet, and evidence of the man's imperishable quirkiness shines through the tracklist: "Dim Sum In Alphabetical Order"! "Banana Construction"! "Imagicknation"!

► Michael Nesmith may have dropped out of Monkees touring duties, but he does figure alongside Michael Nesmith, and Peter Tork on *Good Times*, the first Monkees LP in 20 years, due June 10. Lost '60s songs by Neil Diamond and Harry Nilsson have been revised, along with new material provided by Rivers Cuomo and Ben Gibbard, a Noel Gallagher/Paul Weller co-write and, intriguingly, Andy Partridge.

► Visit www.uncut.co.uk for news, reviews, playlists, and more...



David Litvinoff in Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, in the 1950s

"His friends from Bohemia didn't know how dangerous he could be..."

Rediscovering DAVID LITVINOFF: Clapton and Stones confidant, *Performance* muse – and Krays enforcer!

DAVID LITVINOFF IS one of those characters from the 1960s who always crops up in other people's stories, flitting in and out like a ghost, a fast-talking fixer and minor criminal whose sharp wit and dangerous edge saw him associate with Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger, Donald Cammell, George Melly, Lucian Freud, Peter Rachman and the Krays. Having often been depicted as inexplicable and unknowable, he is now

the subject of a biography by Keiron Pim, whose *Jumpin' Jack Flash: David Litvinoff And The Rock'n'Roll Underground* was five years in the writing.

"Everybody talked of him as this fascinating, funny, clever man whose story was seemingly so difficult to tell," says Pim, who relished the challenge of recovering a seemingly lost life. Litvinoff, a self-mythologising gay Jewish East Ender who flirted with art and aristocracy before meeting the Krays, is best known for his involvement in *Performance*, advising Edward Fox and Donald Cammell on the rhythms of the criminal underworld. Several scenes from the film were based on Litvinoff's ultraviolent experiences as an enforcer and hustler for Rachman and the Krays. "This was a man with a very dark side," says Pim, who sat down with hitmen as well as rock stars. "I had to reconcile these different aspects of his character. Some of his friends from gentle Bohemia didn't know how dangerous he could be."

Pim interviewed more than 100 people in England, Wales and Australia as he sought to put flesh on Litvinoff's bones, sifting truth from myth. It was a sometimes hair-raising experience.

"There were moments when I wondered what the hell I was doing. This man was a lot darker than people realised," says Pim. "There were entertaining stories about what he got up to, but I'm not sure I'd like to have known him then."

Pim portrays Litvinoff as London's answer to Neal Casady. His energetic approach to life saw him pose for Lucian Freud, live with George Melly and turn Eric Clapton on to Dylan's *Basement Tapes*, as the pair bonded over a mutual love of the blues. "Clapton gave a very thoughtful, generous interview," says Pim. "Litvinoff was always listening to music and would try to turn people on to new things."

As interviewee Marianne Faithfull confirms, he was also close to The Rolling Stones, both before *Performance* and after. "He was certainly a strong influence on Jagger in particular," says Pim. "They found him entertaining and exciting. He was slightly older so could show them sides of London they weren't familiar with and even music they hadn't heard. Jagger later learnt how to adopt different guises, which is something Litvinoff had done to survive since the 1950s as a gay Jewish man. The Stones know how to take what they want from people and move on."

Litvinoff delighted in his ability to shock as he lived between the lines, surviving on his wits and the generosity of friends who appreciated his wit and excitement until it became too much. By the 1970s, having spent time in Sydney with Oz artist Martin Sharp, he was burnt out. He committed suicide in 1975, leaving behind little physical trace of his own kaleidoscopic existence. "Clapton was still upset that somebody who he and

his friends thought of so fondly had so much self-loathing that none of their love or affection could get through to him," says Pim. "But he was clearly set on that path and had been for some time."

PETER WATTS

"This was a man with a very dark side. I'm not sure I'd like to have known him then"

***Jumpin' Jack Flash: David Litvinoff And The Rock'n'Roll Underground* by Keiron Pim is published by Jonathan Cape**

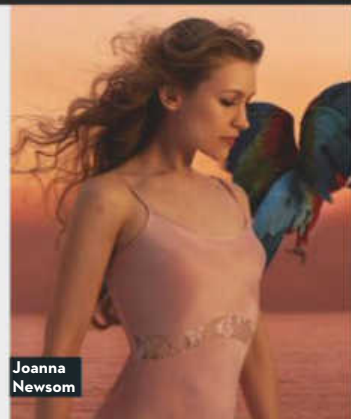
END OF THE ROAD 2016 IN SIGHT!

This year's stars: Joanna Newsom! Animal Collective! Cat Power!

GLAD TIDINGS THIS month, as we can announce that *Uncut* will once again be hooking up with our kindred spirits at the End Of The Road festival this September. As usual, we'll be hosting the Tipi Tent, and a bunch of Q&As with the festival's major stars, at this lovely event; more details to be revealed at www.uncut.co.uk imminently. In the meantime, the powerful 2016 lineup includes **Joanna Newsom**,

Animal Collective, Thee Oh Sees, Cat Power, Devendra Banhart, GOAT, Phosphorescent, Eleanor Friedberger, Bat For Lashes, M Ward, Jeffrey Lewis, Steve Mason, Bill Ryder-Jones and Field Music.

The details for your diary? September 2-4, at the Larmer Tree Gardens near Blandford, in Dorset. The place to buy £195 tickets? www.endoftheroadfestival.com. See you there!



Joanna Newsom



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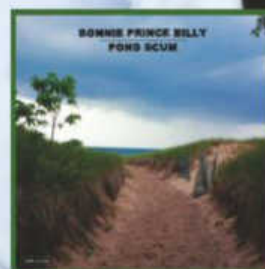
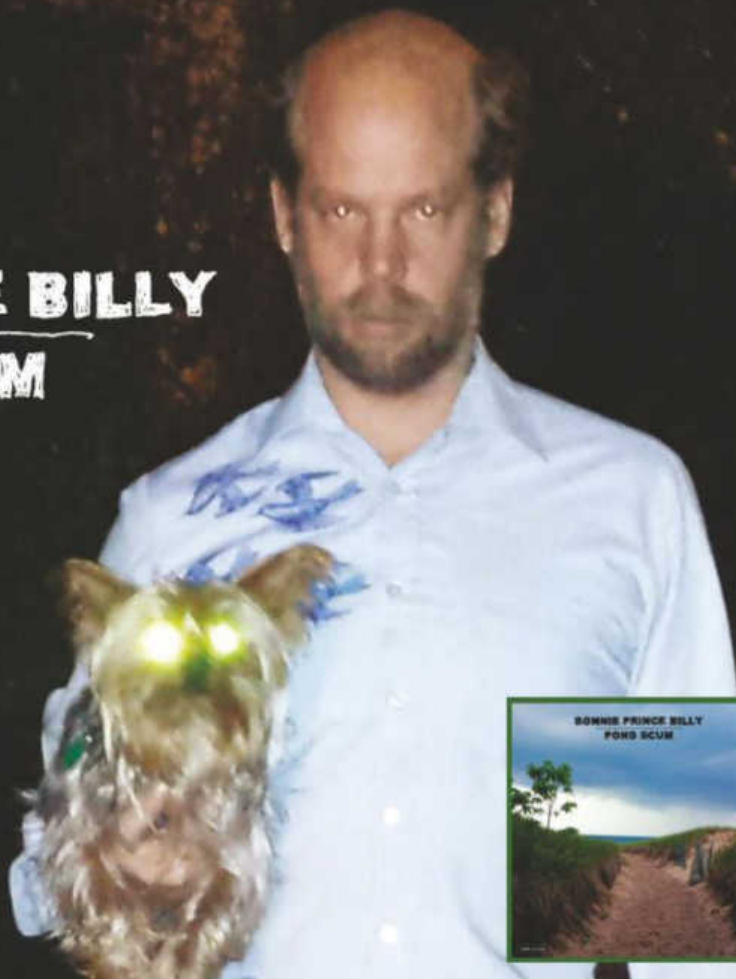
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I'M NEW HERE

KIRAN LEONARD

Recommended this month: a Zappa-infused, perfection-chasing boy wonder from the Manchester fringes

CERTAIN FACTS ABOUT Kiran Leonard fog discussions of his music. He's 20 years old, studying languages at Oxford, and his online recorded output stretches back to when he was 14 – he's deleted much of his earlier work for not being good enough. The Saddleworth-raised musician's debut LP proper, 2013's *Bowler Hat Soup*, contained 20 instruments – more if you count the radiator. The lead single from new LP *Grapefruit* is 16 minutes long, and encompasses Shellac clangour, ambient drone, and Slint malevolence that breaks into hardcore before flipping into warped, string-laden jangle-pop.

Until recently, Leonard was fighting another indie musician (Kieran Leonard) over use of the name. The situation grew “really sinister and quite discomfiting”, he says, though there was “never any doubt” that he'd be the victor. Even if he'd ended up conceding, there would be no mistaking Leonard, an intense high-achiever, for anyone else: his music is dense, ambitious, and betrays a rare depth of thought about sequencing and composition, along with art's role in life. “It's something I take quite seriously, thinking about how I respond to certain things,” he says. “If you think about how important pieces of art have affected you, it can help you to make affecting music.”

His first musical loves were his mum's copies of *OK Computer* and a B-52s mix, though his older brother giving him The Mars Volta's *Frances The Mute* age 10 opened up “a whole new realm of possibility”, he says.

Discovering Frank Zappa later wired the way he thinks about music, which is unabashedly proggy. *Bowler Hat Soup* thrashed

and meandered like a one-man Elephant 6 collective, and saw Leonard take influence from Sufjan Stevens, Van Dyke Parks and Henry Cow. *Grapefruit* is longer, louder, and more freeform; what he calls “unfettered derivation” of his current loves, The Fall, Sun City Girls, William Onyeabor and The Minutemen.

Leonard is a permeable membrane; the bucolic “Half Ruined Already” was inspired by Werner Herzog's *Last Words*, and chuntering freakout “Öndör Gongor” is named after a very tall Mongolian man. Lyrically, however, he admits he can be emotionally oblique. Perhaps unsurprisingly, last summer he released an EP exploring that tendency: “Abandoning Noble Goals” took Daniel Johnston's emotional honesty as its high standard, and concluded that “it's a natural, cowardly impulse to pull away at the last minute”.

With his music being so sprawling, Leonard's only governing impulse is to be as conscientious as possible. “The best thing about Kate Bush is her thoughtfulness,” he says. “I don't get the sense she's ever made a creative decision that didn't have an immense amount of thought behind it, and that's difficult. It's a brilliant thing to value, to have a bit of self-belief without being a narcissist.”

“Willing yourself to have self-belief is different from having it,” he concludes. “I don't think about my opinion of what I make very much.”

Which, of course, is its own kind of self-belief. **LAURA SNAPES**

Grapefruit is out March 25 on Moshi Moshi. **Kiran Leonard** tours the UK March–April, starting at Leeds Brudenell Social Club (March 24)

I'M YOUR FAN

“Kiran is one of those people who are so talented and so singular that it's exciting to wonder what he might do next. He's already made some great music, but you feel he is going to go much further...”

DAVID BREWIS,
FIELD MUSIC



THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

PJ HARVEY

The Hope Six Demolition Project ISLAND
Rumbustious new broadside from the Peej, cementing her current rep as the Queen Of Protest Rock.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Live In Chicago 19/1/16

LIVE.BRUCESPRINGSTEEN.NET

The essential audio companion to this month's cover story, gratis from the Boss... “Oh, the price you pay!”

IGGY POP/TARWATER/ALVA NOTO

Leaves Of Grass MORRMUSIC

Beyond Josh Homme, another radical Iggy collaboration: here, he recites Walt Whitman's greatest hits over discreet German electronica.

KEVIN MORBY

Singing Saw DEAD OCEANS

Game-changing third solo set from the Woods alum, redolent of ...Love And Hate-era Leonard Cohen.

GIMMER NICHOLSON

Christopher Idylls LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

The great lost Ardent album – a ringing set of guitar instrumentals recorded in Memphis in 1968, more Robbie Basho than Big Star.

CATE LE BON

Crab Day TURNSTILE

One crustacean under a groove! Sprung, freaky fourth from the Welsh contrarian in LA.

LET'S EAT GRANDMA

Deep Six Textbook

TRANSGRESSIVE

Impressively uncanny debut of two teenagers with a ritualistic East Anglian take on peak Björk.

KONONO N°1

Konono N°1 Meets

Batida CRAMMEDISCS

Everyone's favourite Congolese thumb-piano fiends hook up with an Angolan producer to recalibrate expectations of African music.

THE DEAD TONGUES

Montana SELF-RELEASED

One for Hiss Golden Messenger and Phil Cook fans; a bluesy fellow traveller steps out of the North Carolina woods.

TRÄD, GRÄS OCH STENAR

Box Set ANTHOLOGY

Six LPs of churning Swedish psych jams? Welcome to the Uncut offices, friends!



Let's Eat Grandma

For regular updates, check our blogs at www.uncut.co.uk and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter

new music



album of the month

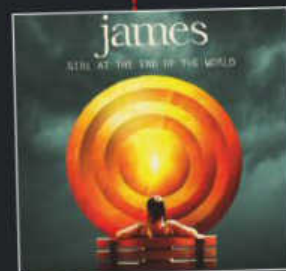
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04/03/2016



steve mason
meet the humans
out now



james
girl at the end of the world
18/03/2016



primal scream
chaosmosis
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for all kings
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nada surf
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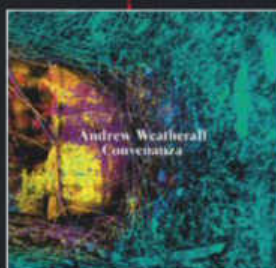
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04/03/2016



andrew weatherall
convenanza
out now



This Unruly Mess
I've Made



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guilty of love
04/03/2016

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ON THE HIGHWAY

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 MARGO PRICE

Hurtin' (On The Bottle)

A rowdy welcome this month, courtesy of one of 2016's breakout stars. Margo Price is a no-bullshit country singer with great songs, a compelling backstory, and the Album Of The Month berth in this month's *Uncut*. Check the small print for "Hurtin' (On The Bottle)", too; one of the co-writers is another *Uncut* darling, Caitlin Rose.



The Solar Motel Band

2 CHRIS FORSYTH AND THE SOLAR MOTEL BAND

The Rarity Of Experience Pt II

Long favoured in the *Uncut* office, Forsyth and his band's magnificently sprung jams reach a new high on their latest album. Here's the title track, notable for one of Forsyth and second guitarist Paul Sukeena's regular Television-style face-offs; at once fraught and utterly ecstatic.

3 THE CORAL

Chasing The Tail Of A Dream

It's been six years, surprisingly, since Liverpool's prime latterday psychedelicists made an album. *Distance Inbetween*, though, is a striking comeback, managing to reference formative influences such as the Bunnymen and early Floyd, while packing a heftier punch that's just as redolent of Queens Of The Stone Age.

4 RICHMOND FONTAINE

I Can't Black It Out If I Wake Up And Remember

Very much a representative song title – and, indeed, song – from Richmond Fontaine and their frontman Willy Vlautin, longtime master of the hard-luck hymnal. Sadly, after a heroic run, this marks the last appearance of the band on an *Uncut* CD: Richmond Fontaine are calling it a day in the wake of one last LP: *You Can't Go Back If There's Nothing To Go Back To*.

5 AZIZA BRAHIM

Calles De Dajla

Chris Eckman long occupied similar territory to Richmond Fontaine, thanks to his assiduous piloting of The Walkabouts. Now, though, he's more associated with the nurturing of new African music, via his productions for his own Glitterbeat label. Here's his latest striking project, an album with this mighty singer from the Western Sahara.

6 GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS

Cry Cry

"The most Southern record that I've made," says the old Grant Lee Buffalo mainman of his deeply twanging eighth solo set, *The Narrows*. You can hear it pointedly on "Cry Cry", in which Phillips reconnects with his Native American heritage by tackling the shameful and brutal Indian Removal of the 1800s.



Grant Lee Phillips

7 HERON OBLIVION

Oriar

A bit less elegiac, this one, being one of the more fervid jams from Heron Oblivion's debut set of ultra-heavy folk-rock. The swooning voice may be familiar, belonging as it does to the normally less turbulent Meg Baird. Her bandmates, meanwhile, feature core members of the venerated Comets On Fire, reconfigured for maximum psychedelic potency.

8 CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS (FEATURING PERFUME GENIUS)

Jonathan

Chaleur Humaine, from which this glimmering electronic gem is plucked, sold by the sackload in its native France, but has now been at least partly translated from the original French for more wary Anglophones. "Chaleur Humaine," we should note, means "Human

FREE
CD!

warmth"; an apt way of describing Héloïse Letissier's lovely vocal performance. Synthpop *froideur* is not, mercifully, in evidence

9 WHITE DENIM

Holda You (I'm Psycho)

A new lineup has, ironically, propelled James Petralli's Texan boogie heroes back to the breakneck euphorics of their early records – hence this screaming highlight from their forthcoming *Stiff*. Taking up where the Solar Motel Band left off, perhaps – wait for another choice section of fried duelling guitars.

10 CHARLES BRADLEY

Changes

A sneak preview of the Screaming Eagle Of Soul's forthcoming third album, as Bradley turns the Black Sabbath chestnut into a deep soul slow burn worthy of Solomon Burke. "It reminds me of the day my mom left me," Bradley tells us on page 7. "I listened to that Black Sabbath album a lot around that time, and when I listen to that last part, I can still hear her last goodbye."

11 M WARD

Confession

Another delightful stab of laidback twang from the well-connected Mr Ward. As if his CV weren't already star-spangled enough, guests on his eighth album – from which this track is plucked – include Peter Buck, KD Lang and Neko Case.

12 KIRAN LEONARD

Pink Fruit [Radio Edit]

Sixteen minutes in its full version (to be found on Leonard's second album, *Grapefruit*), "Pink Fruit" is indicative of a rare young British talent; one with the chops to mix it with next-level players like The Dirty Projectors. Amid much ornate complexity, there's potentially an even more powerful comparison to

be made – with Radiohead, as they grappled their way to the peaks of *OK Computer*.

13 MEILYR JONES

How To Recognise A Work Of Art

As with so many emerging Welsh talents (cf Cate Le Bon), Meilyr Jones has served time in the orbit of Gruff Rhys. "How To Recognise A Work Of Art", though, is a brass-laden trinket of baroque-pop that's closer in spirit to '90s Britpop outliers like The Divine Comedy rather than Super Furry Animals.



Meilyr Jones

14 JEFF COWELL

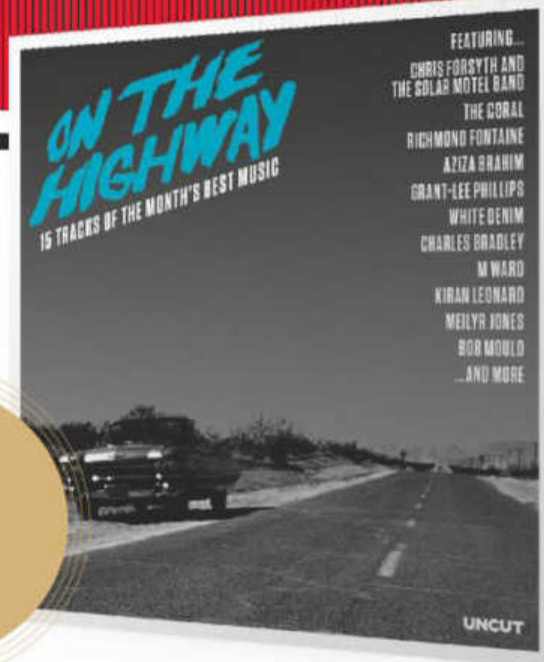
Not Down This Low

An archive find, now, from Numero Group's outstanding *Wayfaring Strangers: Cosmic American Music* collection of genuinely lost '70s songs. Cowell, it seems, fetched up in mid-'70s Chicago after military service and made a couple of sweet Americana records. "Not Down This Low" comes from the second, *Lucky Strikes And Liquid Gold*. Good luck finding an original; the pressing only ran to 200 copies!

15 BOB MOULD

Voice In My Head

Last year's faint hopes of a Hüsker Dü revival proved premature, but Mould's energetic re-engagement with his past continues. "Voice In My Head" takes up where 2014's *Beauty And Ruin* left off, being a clangorous companion piece to Sugar's "Hoover Dam", of all excellent things.



FEATURING...
CHRIS FORSYTH AND
THE SOLAR MOTEL BAND
THE CORAL
RICHMOND FONTAINE
AZIZA BRAHIM
GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS
WHITE DENIM
CHARLES BRADLEY
M WARD
KIRAN LEONARD
MEILYR JONES
BOB MOULD
...AND MORE

ON THE
HIGHWAY
16 TRACKS OF THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

UNCUT

new music



jeff buckley
you and i
11/03/2016



ray lamontagne
ouroboros
04/03/2016



school of seven bells
sviib
out now



the coral
distance inbetween
04/03/2016



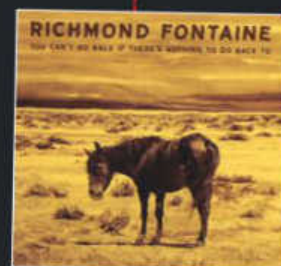
damien jurado
visions of us on the land
18/03/2016



m ward
more rain
04/03/2016



richmond fontaine
you can't go back if there's
nothing to go back to
18/03/2016



pete yorn
arrangingtime
11/03/2016



emmy the great
second love
11/03/2016



the gloaming
2
out now



black peaches
get down you
dirty rascals
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Jeff Lynne

Interview: Michael Bonner
Portrait: Rob Shanahan

The ELO mainman is back, talking famous friends and collaborators: “Paul McCartney? He gave me a great big hug. George Harrison? We hit it off right away!”

DO I REGRET not touring more in the last 30 years?” wonders Jeff Lynne, as he considers ELO’s forthcoming run of European tour dates. “No, to be honest. I’ve had more fun in the studio. I’ve learnt a ton of stuff in that period!” It has been an exceptional time for Lynne recently: ELO’s 2014 comeback show at London’s Hyde Park sold out in 15 minutes, while last year

he released *Alone In The Universe*, the first album of new ELO music in 15 years. This summer, meanwhile, they will play Glastonbury. It seems unlikely, though, that Lynne’s return to live performance will keep him from the studio for long. Indeed, every room in Jeff Lynne’s LA home is extensively wired for sound. “I’ve got mic lines going from every room into the control room,” he explains. “I can record in any room. You can also change the sound of rooms just by where you place the mic.”

The versatility of his residential recording set-up established, Lynne settles back to answer your questions on all aspects of his illustrious career – from ELO mainstay to producer, Traveling Wilbury and Beatle confidant. Along the way, Bob Dylan’s garage is discussed, the contents of Roy Orbison’s car boot are disclosed and Lynne reveals the identity of his favourite ELO album. He also confesses the formative influence on his career of George Formby. “Yeah,” he admits in his soft Birmingham accent. “It was the banjolele that did it for me...”



STAR QUESTION



I once asked you how you make a voice sound on any given track. You told me you pretend to be someone else. On

“Confusion”, I asked you if you were pretending to be Roy Orbison and you told me no, Helen Shapiro. Who were you pretending to be on the track “Stepping Out”? One of my many favourite tracks.

– Francis Rossi, *Status Quo*
I might have been joking! But there’s one on the new album that sounds like it could have been written by Roy Orbison – “I’m Leaving You”. It’s a big old ballad and I pretended I was Roy when I was writing it. I often think about Roy in his early days, how him and his mate, Joe Nelson, used to make up their songs. They used to sit around strumming and I thought, ‘I wonder what chord they’d go to in

this song...’ It seemed to work, as it does sound like an old Roy Orbison B-side. It’s not as good as one of his, of course, but there you go. Roy was the sweetest guy you’d ever wish to meet. In Wilburys sessions, he’d pull me out to the side and say, “Hey Jeffy...” he used to call me Jeffy – and he’d take me outside and open the trunk of his car. There’d be five cream cakes and he’d say, “You can have the first pick.” What a lovely thing. Roy Orbison giving me the first pick when Bob Dylan and George Harrison were in there...

Bob Dylan is the only Traveling Wilbury for whom you didn’t produce a solo album. Was it ever on the cards? Ollie, Carlisle
No, it never was. We did a demo once of him singing “I’m In The Mood For Love” in his garage. There was a little 24-track in the corner. We did “Handle With Care” there, too. I first met Bob when I played the Budokan in Tokyo. I looked over and he was sitting on a monitor, watching me. I thought, ‘Oh, shit. ●

STAR QUESTION



You’re Tom Petty’s best producer. Do you plan on making another album with him?
– Roger McGuinn

I first met Tom at a Bob Dylan concert in Birmingham, when Tom and The Heartbreakers were backing him. The next time I met him, we passed each other in cars and we stopped to have a chat. Who invited Tom to join The Traveling Wilburys? The Wilburys was just me and George to start with and we thought, ‘Right, who should we have in it?’ George thought of Dylan. That was a good idea. Then I thought of Roy Orbison. We both liked Tom very much, so we said, “Let’s have Tom... that should do it.” That’s how the Wilburys came

about. Yes, I would like to produce with Tom again one day, if he ever wants me to. I can’t make him do it!

Are cellists the biggest animals in rock? Chris Bradbury, via email
I wouldn’t say that! Some of them were quite mellow. But I haven’t spoken to any for about 35 years. We used to have three consecutive days for the string sessions. I used to look forward to those. But in the end, it was a pain as they didn’t always play the way I wanted them to. No, they weren’t rock animals. But the unions were rock animals in those days. They’d stop playing when the clock struck the hour. They’d just put the gear away while you were still recording, which is terrible. I’d never do that to anyone. They’ve got to be a bit more humble now due to all the great string samplers. And a computer doesn’t argue with you.



“I haven’t seen
Bev Bevan for
about 45 years,
so I doubt a Move
reunion would
ever happen!”

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

● I'd have done it better if I'd known he was watching." Anyway, after the gig, I was signing autographs for a line of about 20 people. I said to this polite Japanese girl, "Do you mind if I just take a page out of your note book?" So I took the page and her pen and got into the queue to get Bob Dylan's autograph...

What was it like working with Brian Wilson on "Let It Shine"?
Adam Miller, via email
I really enjoyed doing the sessions. I remember fixing the bassline, which went from the highest letter on the grid right down to the bottom E or A string, and he walked in while I was doing it. He stared at me and said, "That's the longest goddam bass string I've ever seen!" I was quite pleased with that! The one thing that stopped *Pet Sounds* from being the best album ever made was that the titles are not memorable at all. The tunes are just sensational, though. Ever since, I've been a giant fan of Brian.

STAR QUESTION



Black Sabbath, Duran Duran, The Streets, Judas Priest, Nick Drake, UB40, Wizzard, Napalm Death and of course ELO

– how does Birmingham produce so many successful bands?

PS: you are a genius.

– *James Dean Bradfield, Manic Street Preachers*

There does seem to be something in the water. In the early to mid-'60s, it was fantastic. There were that many groups. It was rampant. Everybody was in a group or if they weren't, they were gonna be in a group. It was a fantastic atmosphere. And you'd all end up in the Cedar Club or the Rum Runner after you'd finished your gig in the evening. It certainly was a great apprenticeship.

ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES



ELO in the '70s: Bev Bevan in red flares!

Did the spaceship ever break down at live gigs?

John

Fellowes, via email

Yeah. Bits of it would. We'd all come up on hydraulic risers through the stage and a few nights people would get stuck with just their head poking out the stage. It was the funniest thing. I was supposed to be doing my intro, and I'd just be doubled up laughing. No, I never got stuck in it. If my riser was going too quick or it was shaking, I'd jump on someone else's and go up with them.

When you were producing The Beatles in the '90s, there was a rumour of a third Lennon demo that was going to be built into a full song. What was it, and how far did you and the remaining Beatles get before scrapping it?

Alan Wolstencroft, Las Vegas

It was a ballad called "Now And Then". We put a few instruments down and Ringo added a harmony on it. I did a couple of big edits on it, Paul liked it, I liked it. But George didn't like it, so we didn't carry on. Yeah, working with them was amazing, everyone in the same room for the first time in 20 years, sitting there reminiscing about all the Beatles things that you ever wanted to know. Then they had to record something! That was so scary – the responsibility! We recorded the music, then I added John's voice in the middle of the night, when no-one was around, in case it didn't work, so I could do a runner. I came to the studio the next morning and Paul was already there. He came up to me, gave me a great big hug and said, "You've done it, well done." That was a big relief!

Of all your studio albums apart from *Alone In The Universe*, which is your personal favourite?
Chris Minns, via email

It's between *On The Third Day* and *Out Of The Blue*. It's something about the primitiveness. *On The Third Day* was just two cellos and one violin and I'm pleased with those arrangements. The songs are good, a little bit strange, but then I started on the big orchestras. It was a bit of a leap to a 40-piece bloody orchestra from two cellos and one violin. I enjoyed that for the next few albums, then got fed up with it.



ELO: the comeback show, Hyde Park, London, 2014

Do you have a favourite

memory of George Harrison?

Lee Reader, via email

I do, actually. It was when I first met him. I was with Dave Edmunds. He asked Dave Edmunds to ask me if I'd produce *Cloud Nine*. So we went to Friar Park. We rang the bell, he didn't answer it, but Olivia came and said, "Oh, he's down by the lake, go and look for him." So I went down to the lake, and me and George ended up in his boat. He said, "Watch out, because we're going through some tunnels in a bit. Don't put your hands on the sides of the boat to try and hold on. What you've got to do is grip with your bum." I thought that was hilarious. We hit it off right away.

STAR QUESTION



I was privileged to witness your warm-up show in LA where you played a bit of everything throughout your career. From old to new, what track/tracks are you most eager to play on your upcoming tour?

– *Dhani Harrison*

That's a tricky one, I like all of them... they've been so good to me, my little offspring. "Mr Blue Sky", it's always great to play that one. How long have I known Dhani? Since I ended up living at George's house, Friar Park, for about six months when we made *Cloud Nine*. I used to play football with Dhani. He was only a little lad then, a happy little soul. We worked together on *Brainwashed* [George Harrison's posthumously released album]. That was a strain. It was so depressing, as I couldn't turn around and say, "What do you think of that?" George wasn't there to answer for himself.

Would you consider updating any of the Idle Race songs in the way that you revisited ELO

songs? Patrick Chapman, via email

No, not really. They're just wacky little tunes. There were some highly peculiar influences – stuff my dad used to play on his radiogram, old George Formby songs. It was the banjo that did it for me! When I joined the group, they were called The Nightriders, the first band I ever saw in Birmingham. They had a guitarist called Big Al [Johnson], who had a Fender Strat and a beautiful amp. When they'd stop playing and were putting the gear away, he'd let me have a go on it for a bit. I took his place in the group about three years later. Roy Wood was also in the group a few years before that, so there we are.

Are you still in contact with Bev Bevan or Roy Wood and any chance of a Move reunion?

Jerry McGuire, Charlotte, NC

I haven't seen Bevan for about 45 years, so I doubt that would ever happen. I've seen Roy a couple of times in the last few years when back in Birmingham. I got this honoree certificate from Birmingham University. I invited him to that but no, I think, we move on and do what we've got to do. Do I prefer working alone as opposed to collaborating with other musicians? It all depends on the individual case. I do have somebody with me at all times, my engineer, Steve, who's obviously there. He also is a great shaker and tambourine player. Do I ever think it would be nice to have Ben Bevan drum-fill here and there? No, I just love playing everything myself, the drums, the bass, and I love doing the harmonies. Basically, it's what I love doing. ☺

Jeff Lynne's ELO are on tour between April and June; they are also playing Glastonbury Festival. Visit jefflynneselo.com for more details



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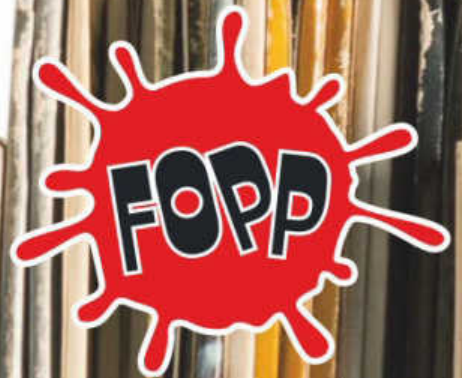
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“He could do so much. It was almost a curse.”

February 1993. JEFF BUCKLEY, a hyperactive music junkie just finding his feet in the New York clubs, enters Shelter Island Studios and records 40 songs in three days. As the session's highlights are finally released, *Uncut* hears the inside story of how a genius singer-songwriter learned his craft via an eclectic songbook. “The goal,” says his A&R man, “was to allow him the time and space to find out which Jeff Buckley he was going to be...”

Story: Graeme Thomson
Portrait: David Gahr

Jeff Buckley in
New York City,
May, 1994

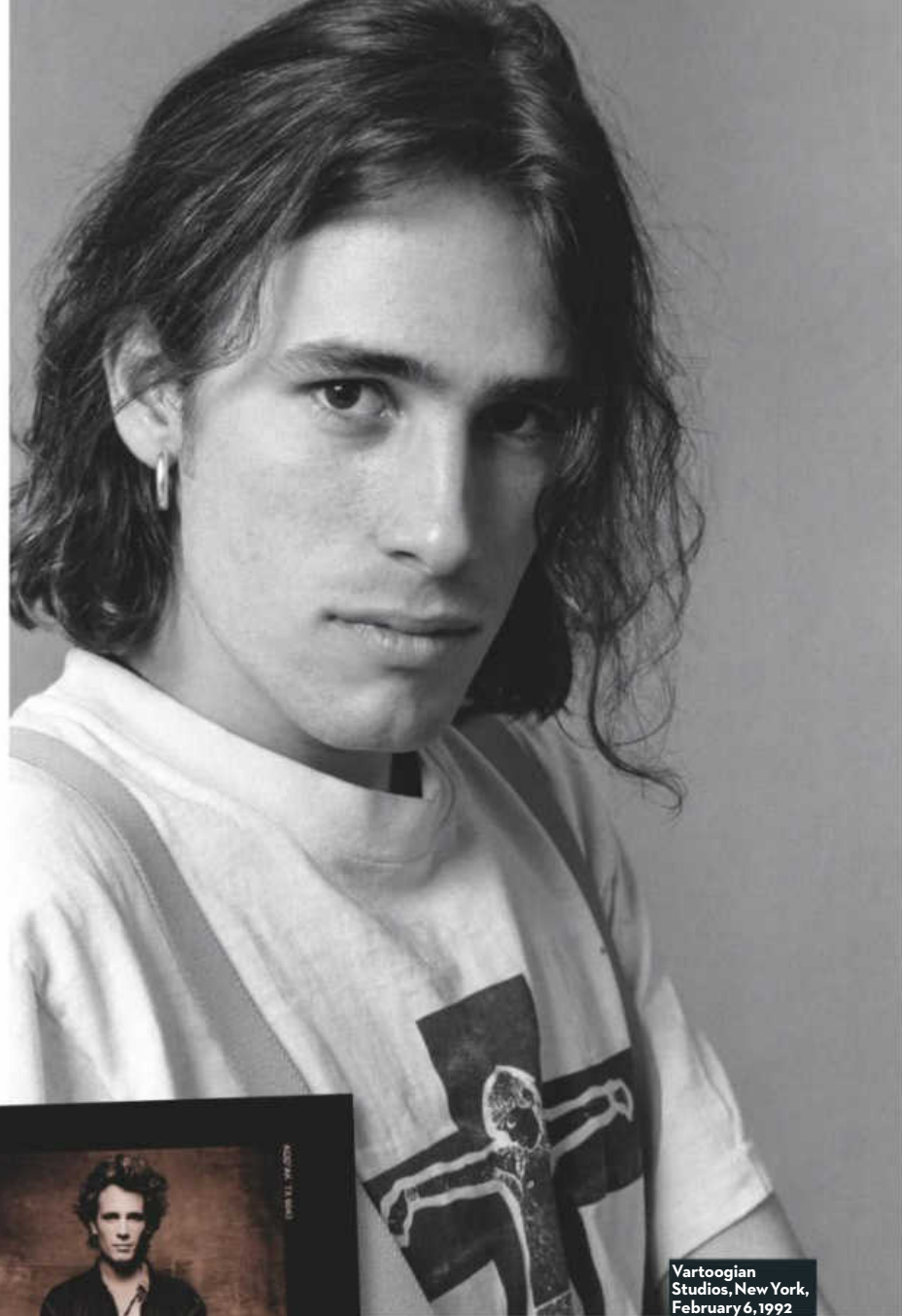
STEVE BERKOWITZ LIKENS Jeff Buckley's first solo recordings to a journey undertaken without any map or clear destination. "It was a musical exercise in self-discovery," says Berkowitz, who signed Buckley to Columbia in the autumn of 1992. "There was no plan. It was very loose, like a conversation in someone's living room. Jeff would move around. Start, stop, start again. I remember he played a Curtis Mayfield song, and then I said, 'Know any Sly?' He sighed and said, 'I don't really know any Sly,' but even as he's saying it he's forming chords and, I swear to God, what comes out is the 'Everyday People' that's on this record. It was breathtaking."

Almost a quarter of a century after the private "conversation" that took place at New York's Shelter Island Sound studios in February 1993, some choice extracts are being made public. The third LP of archive recordings to emerge since his death in May '97, *You And I* captures Buckley when he was 26, living in a "crappy walk-up apartment" in the Lower East Side with girlfriend Rebecca Moore, consuming music by day and performing in the city's cafés, clubs and bars by night. "The creativity was just pouring out of him at that point," says his manager, Dave Lory.

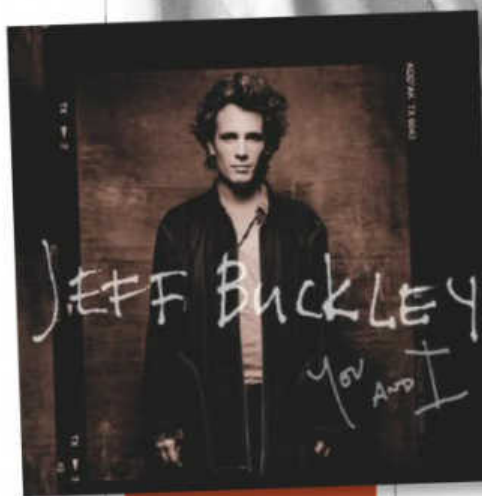
Buckley had made an appreciable early impact at the "Greetings From Tim Buckley" tribute to his late father, held at St Ann's Church in Brooklyn in April 1991. Following a brief stint in Gary Lucas' psych-rock band Gods And Monsters, in the spring of 1992 he began playing solo spots around New York, most auspiciously at Sin-é, a tiny Irish bar in the East Village. Come late summer, limousines were lining St Mark's Place, ferrying suitors from every major record company. Steve Berkowitz was one of them, although he preferred to walk. "I was sucked in by his voice and guitar playing," he says. "The way he was singing and playing these songs, which were mostly covers, seemed fully orchestrated. Yet it was casually done; it seemed spontaneous and unrehearsed."

This constant promise of vaulting transformation is preserved on *You And I*. Hopping between electric and acoustic guitar, piano and organ, Buckley attempted around 40 songs over three days. The 10 tracks eventually selected for the album are by turns playful, illuminating, alchemical and deeply moving. There is raw slide-blues, smooth nu-soul and heart-stopping balladry. Alongside an embryonic version of "Grace", later the title track of his 1994 debut album, are radically reconstructed versions of songs by artists as diverse as Sly Stone, Bob Dylan and The Smiths.

Throughout, the mood was relaxed. "There was a lot of good coffee going down," says Berkowitz. "This is not a euphemism for drug-taking! We're playing music and drinking coffee, and then we're drinking a couple of beers, as well." Towards the end of Led Zeppelin's "Night Flight", Buckley stops the song in its tracks, frustrated or distracted



Vartoogian Studios, New York, February 6, 1992



"Jeff was serious about his work, maybe to a fault"
STEVE ADDABBO

by something. The one new piece on show, "Dream Of You And I", is little more than an extemporised sketch, prefaced by Buckley's sweet, spoken-word explanation of the dream that inspired it. "It was a concert for two," engineer Steve Addabbo recalls fondly. "Those sessions were spellbinding. That has nothing to do with his death or anything that happened subsequently. I felt the same way at the time."

As the sole witnesses, Berkowitz and Addabbo were given a ringside seat at the birth of a legend. Now, joined by four more of Buckley's intimates, they piece together the story of Jeff Buckley's first steps towards greatness.

STEVE BERKOWITZ (A&R executive at Columbia):

We signed Jeff in the autumn of 1992 with the understanding that he would have complete control of his music. That was in the contract. He was capable of doing so much, the initial goal was to allow him the time and space to find out which Jeff Buckley he was going to be: are we going to wait for this flower to bloom, or are we going to cut it off? My job was to give him time to bloom.

MICHAEL TIGHE (friend; guitarist in Buckley's live band, 1994-1996): I can remember Jeff holding this thick record contract in his hand on the night he was doing a show at [Brooklyn arts venue] PS1. He was a little scared, but it was

also pretty exciting. He knew Columbia could get his music out there, but he also knew he was very green as far as songwriting and developing his sound went.

BERKOWITZ: By early '93, the record company is asking, "So, what are you doing?" Not much! We hang around a lot. He comes to my house for Christmas, he mimes Warner Bros cartoons with my son. We go to a lot of gigs, play a lot of music, drink a lot of coffee. He's playing every bump and hole in the wall in the city, but four, five, six months after he signed, there are no plans to record. So I suggest to Jeff, "Why don't we go into this nice studio with this guy I know, relax for a couple of days, play everything you know, and at the end you can pick out three or four things that can be the beginnings of an idea for an album?" And he said, "OK, let's do that."

STEVE ADDABBO (producer and owner of Shelter Island Sound studios, New York):

They needed a Table Of Contents session, just to put Jeff in the studio and see what he can do. I knew about his dad, but I didn't know much about Jeff at that point. I still remember his intensity. He looked you straight in the eye. I'd done first records by Suzanne Vega and Shawn Colvin, and I knew the door he was going through. I didn't want to impose myself, but I tried to make him comfortable. It's not a huge studio. The recording area is maybe 20 feet by 16. The equipment went back to 1979 – it was vintage, tube mics and a lot of that old vibe.

BERKOWITZ: Steve had a beautiful studio, with good instruments and nice guitars. Jeff brought his Telecaster, I brought my Gibson ES-330, and he used one of Steve's beautiful Guild acoustic guitars. There was no band. Nobody was going to tell him who his band was going to be.

ADDABBO: We set him up so he just could wander from instrument to instrument. He had an acoustic guitar station, an electric guitar station, a Wurlitzer electric piano, and we placed a mic in a harmonium, so he could go back and forth right away. He was using headphones most of the time, and we just let the tapes roll.

BERKOWITZ: We get to the studio on the first day, and Jeff's very tight. We

YOU AND I: FACT BOX

Recorded: February 3-5, 1993, Shelter Island Sound, New York

Personnel: Jeff Buckley, guitar and vocals

Engineer: Steve Addabbo

TRACKLIST:

Just Like A Woman: written and recorded by Bob Dylan, *Blonde On Blonde*, 1966

Everyday People: written by Sylvester Stewart, recorded by Sly & The Family Stone, *Stand!*, 1969

Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin': written by Joe Greene, first recorded by Louis Jordan, released January 1946

Grace: written by Jeff Buckley and Gary Lucas, later recorded on *Grace*, 1994

Calling You: written by Bob Telson, recorded by Jevetta Steele on the soundtrack to *Bagdad Cafe*, 1987

Dream Of You And I: written by Jeff Buckley, previously unreleased

The Boy With The Thorn In His Side: written by Morrissey and Marr, recorded by The Smiths, *The Queen Is Dead*, 1985

Poor Boy Long Way From Home: traditional, recorded by Bukka White on a 1939 field recording by John Lomax

Night Flight: written and recorded by Led Zeppelin, *Physical Graffiti*, 1975

I Know It's Over: written by Morrissey and Marr, recorded by The Smiths, *The Queen Is Dead*, 1985

Jeff's covers, from top: Bob Dylan, Sly Stone, Louis Jordan, Jevetta Steele, The Smiths, Bukka White, Led Zeppelin

don't discuss it, but it's clear he's going, "Oh shit, I'm recording for The Man, every note I sing is going on tape!" You think about that once or twice and you're not as present as you should be. I could always tell when he was nervous, because I thought his face was going to crack.

ADDABBO: I think Jeff felt the pressure. "Number one, I'm following in my father's footsteps. Number two, I'm on Columbia, and there's a lot of expectation." Jeff took it all very seriously and to heart. He was not a flake by any means; he was very conscientious and serious about his work, maybe to a fault. He knew he was taking some big first steps, and I felt he was very aware of this impending machine coming along. Berkowitz was very nurturing. He was very aware of the delicacy of the situation.

BERKOWITZ: If you could hear the rest of the tapes from day one, a lot of it would be really aggravating, because it's me sitting next to Jeff playing pencils, tapping on cups, and singing along. He's tight. His voice isn't opened up. So we drink some coffee, we drink some beer. We get to four or five in the afternoon and his eyes start to close, his voice starts to accelerate, and another octave appears. I slip out of the room and behind the glass. I've done my job, which was to aid him to become free of the circumstances and just play what he was feeling. By the end of the afternoon of the first day it was loose, and he was happy to be there. It's, "OK, this is good, see you tomorrow."

ADDABBO: He'd come in around one o'clock and we'd work until eight or nine. He was performing and singing the whole time, so it was quite a long stretch each day.

DAVE LORY (manager, 1993-1997): He was all about the live stuff, not so much recording at that stage. He would jump off a cliff and I would say, "Have you got a parachute?" and he'd reply, "I think so!" It was part instinct, but mostly that he really knew what the hell

he was doing. He was the only artist I trusted 100 per cent blindly.

ADDABBO: There was such an immediate emotional connection. When he started to sing he just went someplace else. He could go from a blues growl to an incredible soprano, Led Zeppelin to "Ave Maria". He had the octaves! I had to make sure he wasn't screwing up my mic settings, because he would go from a whisper to *waaarrgh*. I'd go diving for the dials. It was pretty humbling to be in the vicinity and hear what he could do. I specifically remember wondering what path we should take, because he could do so much it was almost like a curse. To make a record you have to have an artistic direction, and he had so many facets. So that was part of the purpose of the sessions: "What do we have? What have I signed?" It was fascinating to be there.

BERKOWITZ: There was no plan. I had seen him play so many times, and as the sessions went on I was making a list of the songs he had done. I might suggest others, or he might bring something up. He would move around, he would start, he would stop, he would start again.

Buckley live with Gary Lucas (left) and Julia Haywood at the *Greetings From Tim Buckley* concert, St Ann's Church, Brooklyn, April 26, 1991





Tower Records,
Westwood, Los
Angeles, May 3, 1995

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Steve Addabbo on
the potential for
You And I Pt 2

“THERE’S A LOT more where this record came from! Even today, I can go to any spot on these tapes and be transfixed. It’s not as if these 10 tracks are the only good spots on the tapes. There wasn’t a defining moment; there was just a lot of great stuff going on. I heard “Hallelujah” for the first time at this session. I wasn’t familiar with the Leonard Cohen (inset) version, and I thought, ‘What the hell is this?’ It was a little different from the released version, but it had a raw energy, and the delicacy of his voice was something else.

To be so quiet and yet so clear. It was an amazing moment. There’s so much good stuff still on there.”

● I might say, “Wanna do it again? Wanna try it slower?” It was loose, like a conversation in someone’s living room.

ADDABBO: I was not producing him by any means. We were just letting him do whatever he felt like. A song wouldn’t necessarily be done the same way twice. It might be much faster, or slower, or he’d move his capo up. Sometimes he would just grab stuff out of the air and do something in a way he’d never done it before. “Just Like A Woman” was like that. He seemed to decide to sing it only after he’d started playing.

TIGHE: We had discovered *Blonde On Blonde* and *Astral Weeks* around that time. That’s when he was really getting into those records. I remember he was house-sitting for someone in the West Village, and we would listen to those albums all the time at her place. We also bonded over rural blues, particularly Bukka White. He played all these songs at his solo shows.

BERKOWITZ: “Calling You” was a very popular live song for him. The movie it was from [*Bagdad Cafe*] was kind of underground, but people knew the song. It was like a hit that hadn’t been a hit. Those beautiful vocal curlicues at the top of “Calling You” are part of him discovering his own voice and letting it fly. I call it the “Flying Buckleys”, his own version of that Roy Orbison or Tony Bennett [*crescendo*]. It was like a delicious exercise machine, that song. It felt like a great relief on his part to get that part of his voice going.

ADDABBO: Then it’d be on to The Smiths!

TIGHE: Jeff always thought that Morrissey was one of the best, if not the best, lyricists. He continued to do both of The Smiths’ songs on *You And I* with his band well into 1996. Sometimes at the end of a show he would throw in “I Know It’s Over” with “Hallelujah” as an encore.

STEVE ABBOTT (label boss at Big Cat, which released the “Live At Sin-é” EP outside the US): He was a big Smiths fan. It was perfect for him, route one: intelligent/controversial lyrics, great guitar lines, and a character out

front. He liked the British and Irish thing. He loved The Rolling Stones, he loved *Pin Ups* by Bowie; that was a record he knew backwards. He loved punk, he loved British indie. At this time, he really loved Lush and the Cocteau Twins.

DAPHNE BROOKS (Author of Jeff Buckley’s *Grace* 33 $\frac{1}{3}$): He was Spotify before Spotify! He had this vast archival memory, and the ability to stream it. What he did with all that material was synthesise it into a loving engagement. He was fearless in being willing to immerse himself in the moment of performance to see what he could draw out of it.

BERKOWITZ: He didn’t play cover songs. He played other people’s compositions and made them his own. He consumed the idea and the feel. He was really a blues singer, I think. He had that religious depth of feeling that blues music has, or that Billie Holiday had. You can hear it on “Don’t Let The Sun Catch You Cryin’”, which is just an exquisite performance.

TIGHE: That song was also sung by Ray Charles, and there are some real similarities between Jeff and Ray, in that they were singers and musicians before they were songwriters. It was almost like they did tons of covers in order to get to their own badass songs. With Jeff, there wasn’t much original material at that point.

BERKOWITZ: He had written “Grace” with Gary Lucas, the guitar player in Gods And Monsters, before they split up. All the stuff Gary wrote [*on guitar*], Jeff was very capable of playing as well, as he did here, with those fast, repetitive riffs.

ADDABBO: He wasn’t confident about his songwriting at all. He relied on his covers; there were very few original compositions played throughout the three days.

BERKOWITZ: We had got to the point in the sessions of, “So, what else have you got?” when I heard him singing, “*You and I, you and I*.” I said, “What is that, where did that come from?” Click. Record. “Yeah, this was a dream...” and he started telling the story about a gay couple. This was a

“He had a
religious
depth of
feeling,
like the
blues”

STEVE
BERKOWITZ

JB
DOES
JB

Steve Abbott recalls Buckley's 1993 party piece: reciting an entire James Brown album...

"REALLY, Jeff could have been a comedian. One thing I'll never forget is him doing every single note, squeal, yelp and lyric, all at once, from James Brown's [1963 album] *Live At The Apollo*. It was the most amazing thing I ever saw him do. If there was someone he fancied in the vicinity, or he just felt like amusing himself, he'd do it. It was a respectful imitation of JB, body movements, the lot. He either spent a lot of time on it, or he was just so talented he could do it. Probably the latter. It would be on someone's cell phone nowadays, but I'm quite glad it's not. To me, of all the music he ever made, that performance was the most special. It was absolutely bonkers, but seminal. That was Jeff, really. People sometimes regard his music in a kind of maudlin manner, but he was so full of life."

kind of verboten subject in 1993, but not in Jeff's world. There are people dying of AIDS all around us in the Village. That was "Dream Of You And I". It's almost some kind of healing chant. I thought, 'This is fantastic, this is going to be an opera,' but of course, it's just two minutes of his brain working! We kept thinking we would come back to it one day. We thought there would be many more days. We didn't think they would get cut short. And he was never one for going backwards.

ABBOTT: Those formative years are all about his influences rather than his songwriting. He listened to so many things and managed to channel them into his talent and eventually come up with something that had his own stamp on it. He was a musical magpie; he could imitate anything. He did a great Robert Plant, which you hear on "Night Flight". He did a grumpy Leonard Cohen. I remember he did a perfect Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan the night after first hearing him!

LORY: If Jeff met you, he could mimic you within five minutes. He'd do impersonations of Beavis & Butthead on the tour bus, or of record company execs, and it was the same with music. He could pull the soul out of it. Even with the worst rap or country, he'd find the good in it. He was like a sponge. He'd always say, "It's about the music, stooopid!"

"Other people do drugs. Jeff was a music junkie"

DAVE LORY



In New York, May, 1994, with Michael Tighe, far right

JEFF BUCKLEY COLUMBIA

ABBOTT: Music was his language. I can't remember ever talking with him about much else. He was a big Guinness drinker, and we would meet at a bar called Tom & Jerry's, which had a great jukebox. He would ask how my daughter was, then it was, 'Have you heard the new...?' He sat around playing guitar all day, and listening to records and cassettes. He would devour them.

LORY: He was always playing music. If he wasn't playing he was listening – or dancing, or singing. That was his escapism. Other people do drugs. He was a music junkie. He was very fun-loving, but there was a vulnerability. He never really had any roots as a child. You could sense his fear, his loneliness, and it made you want to protect him more.

TIGHE: He perhaps became a little bit more withdrawn and

melancholy later on, but in '93 he didn't come across as a person with a lot of pain. He was overjoyed and hyperactive. He had a lot of Californian punk-rock energy. Super-positive, tons of ideas. I'd come home from high school and he'd be vaulting over the couch with my toddler brother. He'd make these elaborate skits as an answering-machine message for him and his girlfriend, which would include the character of Spinach The Cat. It was this weird story that would last three minutes. He would even call me to do rehearsals: "Do you think I should do the Spinach voice like this...?"

BERKOWITZ: On the third day of the sessions, I remember Jeff finally saying, "OK, that's it, let's finish them." Which meant I would listen to them and edit them down and say, "What do you think of these?" He'd say, "Forget those, but these are good," or, "Let's start to focus on this." The idea was: pour it all out, record it all, and then he'd pick a few that he liked, and he could decide what was going to be the beginnings of the march towards his album. That was the goal. So this was not meant to be a big-deal recording session. In fact, as it was supposed to be a demo, it was cut straight to 16-bit DAT. That's it! A little too much digital reverb, perhaps, but that was the times...

ADDABBO: There was no thought of it being released, it was just a scratch tape of what went down as we heard it at the time, but it's a pretty clean recording. All in all, at the end of the third day we had seven and a half hours of recording. About five 90-minute DATs.

TIGHE: Talking to me, Jeff didn't put a lot of emphasis on these sessions. It was just a document of where he was at that time. He was trying to sculpt that first album in his head.

BERKOWITZ: Afterwards, things start to speed up. Now Sin-é is crowded, we think he's going to be a star. At the end of 1993 we start *Grace*. When we went in to record *Grace* it was going to sound like these *You And I* sessions or his Sin-é EP, but with some background musicians. That's all it was going to be, until his brain went into overdrive: more vocals, more guitar, more developments! The ability was always there. We heard it at the Shelter Island sessions, and we knew he would bring it all one day, but we didn't think it would be that early. With *Grace*, he allowed the switch to go on.

ADDABBO: It was very frustrating over the years to have these tapes on the shelf. I've been very protective of them, but I'm glad they're coming out. It's the magic of what we do, that we can hear Jeff like he's still here.

BERKOWITZ: This was just a pathway to the record he wanted to make, but I'm happy that people get to hear it. It shows where he's at before he becomes more polished and gets deeper into his groove. It's a really great and important chapter. And you know what? If we'd stayed three more days, there would have been 40 other songs! You see, Jeff was never bad. He never sucked. And he could do anything. 🎵

You And I is released on March 11 through Columbia/Legacy Recordings



GETTY IMAGES

The Dirty Epic

UNDERWORLD's odyssey has now lasted 36 years, since Karl Hyde and Rick Smith first met. It's a journey that's taken them from burning shaman's huts to the Cardiff docks, from the mean streets of New York to the Essex hinterlands, and all the way to the Olympics opening ceremony. And it incorporates Conny Plank, Debbie Harry, Prince and the "the Samuel Pepys of his universe". How have they lasted so long? "Karl," says Rick, "was the most annoying person I'd ever met."

Story: Michael Bonner

Portrait: David Tonge

IN THE EARLY '90s, Karl Hyde found himself living at New York's Gramercy Park Hotel. His band, a funk-rock five-piece called Underworld, had recently broken up and Hyde was working as a session musician. During the day, he was recording at Electric Lady Studios with Debbie Harry's band; by night, he was exploring new methods of writing. Inspired by the open-ended narratives of Sam Shepard's *Motel Chronicles* and the vivid reportage of Lou Reed's *New York* album, Hyde had taken to pacing the streets of Lower Manhattan after dark, armed with a notebook and pen. "It was easy pickings," he remembers. "Literally, you've just got to open your notebook and the stuff just falls in. You've just got to look at it and go, 'Wow, that's a Martin Scorsese moment, isn't it? There it is, it's all there.' I wanted to write what I saw and sing what people speak, because people speak extraordinary things. It became the basis of what I do."

Meanwhile, in Romford, his close collaborator Rick Smith experienced an epiphany of his own. "It was not a great time for Karl and me," he admits. "We were managing to just about stay in contact. I had to close down the little studio that we'd built, sell stuff to pay off the band's debts. I felt very isolated. Then my wife turned round to me and said, 'You've got to start following your heart.' Probably the best single piece of advice I've had in my life. I had some desperate ideas. But it didn't go well. In 1990, I think I earned £135 in the whole year. It was a tricky time."

Within two years, Hyde and Smith had successfully turned their fortunes around. After what Hyde ruefully

describes as "a failed career for 10 years", he and Smith – best friends and colleagues since 1979 – began to enjoy the benefits of their revitalised band. But Underworld's trajectory since the early '90s has been unconventional, to say the least. There have been 16-hour 'ArtJams' in Tokyo, commissions for the National Theatre, film scores and the not-so-small matter of the London Olympic Games to keep them occupied. Last year, they celebrated the 20th anniversary of 1994's album *Dubnobasswithmyheadman*; next month they release *Barbara Barbara, We Face A Shining Future* – their ninth studio album and first for six years.

Reflecting today on those pivotal events from a quarter of a century ago – where the future for Hyde and Smith looked to be anything but shining – Hyde insists that the pair have constantly remade themselves in response to both opportunity and insult.

"Every time we got ditched, we'd go back to this magical, imaginary Brigadoon that was somewhere out in Berlin, where these oscillators were vibrating and coming to us via John Peel," says Hyde. "It was based on our love of film scores, dub, electronics and stuff on the radio. One time, we rented a little house in Bexhill-on-Sea. We'd instigate these salons with other musicians. We'd pile up equipment, plug into an eight-track and rotate around the equipment. Sometimes you would be in front of the drum pads, sometimes a guitar, sometimes keyboards. We'd put *The Terminator* on the telly, turn off the sound and play to it. That would become the basis of the music. They were interesting times."



Two heads are
better than one:
Underworld in
London, 1998—
(l-r) Rick Smith
and Karl Hyde

underworld

Dubnobass... 20th anniversary show at the Royal Festival Hall in London, October 11, 2014

RECENTLY, KARL HYDE has been working on a new art installation in Berlin. The city has held a fascination for him since he first heard David Bowie's *Low*. He talks enthusiastically about the "deeply esoteric noise clubs where people play the sound of walking on gravel on a laptop". They remind him of his time at art school during the mid-'70s, where he was involved in happenings on the pavement outside the college gates. "I found a big cardboard box and got inside it and closed the lid," he says. "I used to do that as a kid, if my mum and dad bought a new dustbin, I'd ask if I could just sit in it for a while and listen to the rain."

Hyde was raised in Bewdley, near Kidderminster. Growing up, he was used to seeing local luminaries Robert Plant and Geezer Butler about town – "They both bought their chicken wire at the ironmongers where my mate used to work." Among Hyde's most cherished childhood memories are car journeys with his father, soundtracked by the radio. "In the '60s, it was all AM, so you had these incredible harmonics coming in because the radio was retuning itself. It's very evocative. It makes pictures. I have synesthesia, so for me radio is like going to the movies," he explains.

Benefiting from the progressive higher education programmes in place during the 1970s, he enrolled at Cardiff University. "My degree was in video installation," he says. "I built a giant shaman's hut and lived in there, setting fire to things until the dean asked me if I'd kindly set my fires outside of the building. It was mind-blowing. We were making tape loops, musique concrète. All the things I'd heard between the channels on the radio as a kid, and the rain on the roof of the rubbish bin."

While at Cardiff, Hyde formed a band, Screen Gemz – "a cartoon, bubblegum version of stuff that was doing well in the charts". Among their few claims to fame, they played a gig on the roof of the university's student union. Rick Smith – who'd moved to Cardiff from Ammanford, a



Freur days: (l-r) Rick Smith, Bryn Burrows, Karl Hyde, John Warwicker, 1984



village in Carmarthenshire – was in attendance. "A significant moment for me was seeing Emerson, Lake & Palmer's video for 'Fanfare For The Common Man'," Smith explains. "They shot it at Montreal Olympic Stadium, in the snow, with their fur coats on. No audience. It looked so mad and fantastic and otherworldly, and completely beyond anything that I could comprehend in terms of my upbringing and education. When Screen Gemz

played on the student's union rooftop, I thought that was a bit like Emerson, Lake & Palmer in the Olympic Stadium, in a Welsh way. They asked me to join the band. I jumped at it. Within about six weeks I thought it was the biggest mistake I'd made.

"I have no idea what impressed me about Karl," he continues. "He was the most annoying person I'd ever met. But I didn't bugger off. Karl and I have been together 36 years. I don't know how that's happened."

"He had a really nice coat," says Hyde of their first meeting. "A navy-blue herringbone trenchcoat. Clearly it had been expensive at one point, but he must have bought it in an Oxfam shop. Rick was fired on enthusiasm. He had energy. He had a Fender Rhodes and we needed somebody who played synth. He was on this electronics course in Cardiff. They had big modular synths and they were transmitting information via laser across Cardiff."

JOHAN WARWICKER – a former graphics and fine art student at Camberwell School Of Arts – remembers the first time he met Hyde and Smith at their house in Splott, south-east of Cardiff's city centre. "Rick and Karl are odd. I say that with love, but that's their strength. It's like a marriage when you go, 'Why are those people together?' But there's something unseen and unspoken between them. They rile each other or respect and enjoy what the other person's

doing, even though it's entirely opposite. What Rick does, Karl couldn't do. Vice versa."

Warwicker joined Hyde and Smith in their next musical escapade, Freur, an art-pop band. "We were on the dole and living in the docks in Cardiff," says Hyde. "So we decided we were going to wear make-up and pearls and dress in bright colours, just to piss everybody off. We were listening to heavy dub and German electronics. *Low* was the big thing for us at that time, and Kraftwerk. Rick took a loan to buy a Sony Walkman. He used to walk round Cardiff listening to *Computer World*."

"Being able to take music on the move was a transforming experience," says Smith.

"I was hearing music and seeing the world in a different way. It was the experience of letting music infect me while I took my journeys and let my thoughts ramble."

Freur signed to CBS, and even secured a session with Conny Plank at his studio near Cologne.

"We were picked up by a giant lemon-yellow military troop carrier manned by four bearded, long-haired hippies," recalls Hyde. "We were dressed in regulation Freur beads, crimped hair, make-up and plastic clothes. That must have made for an interesting sight."

"I remember eating fried aubergines with Conny," says Smith. "It was quite overwhelming. We were at the first stages of a proper deal. Which was a dream come true when you were signing on the dole or washing dishes for tuppence. It might have been the first time I got on an airplane."

"We had this track at the time, 'Doot Doot'.

We worked on that and a couple of others with Conny. But the version of the track that we came out with bore no more fruit to the record company. So we moved on very quickly."

Freur disbanded in 1986; a year later, Hyde and Smith launched the first incarnation of Underworld. They recorded their debut album – *Underneath The Radar* – with producer Rupert Hine, whose credits include Howard Jones, Stevie Nicks and the Thompson Twins. Hine recalls Hyde and Smith bringing a predictably unusual set of experimental principles to the sessions. "Rather than do individual takes of each song, we recorded them playing five or six songs in a row – the side of an album," says Hine.

"It was a very conceptual idea. Karl is the conceptualist. Rick is an amazing amplifier for the best sides of Karl's ideas; he's a really good balance for Rick's more passionate skills. But neither one of them is anywhere near the same without the other."

But by the end of the '80s, Underworld seemed to have run its course. "We went on a stadium tour of America with Eurythmics," says Smith. "It was an awful experience. I hated the music that we made. I'd made demos for the last Underworld album [1989's *Change The Weather*] at home. My first explorations with a computer, boxes that you plugged in and stuck on the dining-room table. They were really successful, but we went and changed them all and recorded this semi-rock, funk thing. I hated it. At the end of the tour, our label and management dropped us."

While Smith returned to the UK, Hyde based himself in the States. He worked at Paisley Park as a session musician – "I got to see Miles Davis and meet Maceo Parker and watch Prince put The New Power Generation together" – before the call came inviting him to work with Debbie Harry. He signed on a package tour including Harry, The Sisters Of Mercy, Billy Idol and Iggy Pop. "Every night, I got to stand on the side of the stage and watch Jim [Osterberg] turn into

ArtJam, Makuhari Messe, Tokyo, 2007

BLUEPRINTS! ARTJAMS! AUGMENTED REALITY!

Celebrating 25 years of Tomato – Underworld's "sybiotically linked" design agency

IN 1991, KARL Hyde and Rick Smith joined together with five other like-minded creatives to form Tomato, a multi-media art and design collective. "Rick and Karl had a bit of a rocky time in the mid-to-late '80s," begins John Warwicker. "They lost their purpose, they didn't know who they were. A few other friends were in a similar situation. We decided we would all get together in a room and see what happens. Nobody necessarily knew each other. I always liken Tomato to Alcoholics Anonymous. It's a support system and critical forum."

"Underworld and Tomato are completely different entities in terms of responsibility and organisation," says Rick Smith. "But in terms of ethos, stuff to do with spirit and process, the idea blurs a great deal. Tomato is tremendously important to us. For me,

who'd had no formal education in art or – beyond my mother giving me piano lessons – in music, Tomato is alive with excitement and talent. I could walk in there, pen a drawer and pull out bits of blueprints and it would make me want to run home and make music."

Apart from designing all Underworld's artwork, Tomato and the band have collaborated on a number of projects. "They had their first big gig at the Astoria [in 2000] and we needed to do something," remembers Warwicker. "Do you do a T-shirt? 'No, let's do a book.' But the gig's in three weeks... That's the great thing about the guys in Tomato. Get it done. Make a virtue of your ineptitude."

There have also been a series of ArtJams, the largest of which took place in Tokyo to launch 2007's *Oblivion With Bells* album. "It was at the Makuhari Messe, which makes Earl's Court look like a shed," says Warwicker. "The idea was to do a chill-out room with painting. The wall that we painted is 42.5m long by 7.5m high. Bloody big. The idea was, we'd start painting, people would come in, Underworld would play, we'd finish the painting afterwards."

To mark Tomato's 25th anniversary this year, Warwicker reveals Tomato plans "to occupy the streets of Tokyo through augmented reality! Karl and Rick might well be involved..."

"“Born Slippy” was my way of saying, ‘Somebody please help me’”

KARL HYDE

Iggy. That was another thing that went into the memory banks for Underworld."

A CONVERSATION WITH HYDE and Smith about their working practices quickly reveals much about their individual interests. Sitting with Hyde in the refurbished Renaissance Hotel above St Pancras station, he retrieves from his satchel a black Alwych notebook and a white Pentel pen. "I spend an hour every morning in a café, with my porridge and my tea, and I'll find a corner and I'll write," he explains. "It's my daily discipline. Sometimes I'll write the conversations that are going on around me." He opens the book and begins to recite from his previous day's entries. "*Red suit/What are you looking at/Leaning so nonchalant/You try too hard/Obvious bust of a sun-head man/Zebra shopping mall/Hides your hands behind your back/Naked round the middle/Stern in black/Alabaster skin/Albino armadillo/Exploding silver pom pom/Leans back across a chair/Provocative bird of paradise.*"

John Warwicker – who along with Hyde and Smith co-founded the design collective Tomato in 1991 – describes Hyde as "the Samuel Pepys of his universe. We walked the streets of New York together, following people. People



BUNNY PECULIAR...

Karl Hyde explains how a famous comedian influenced Underworld's biggest hit...

“BORN SLIPPY’ IS a map of a journey that starts at The Ship on Wardour Street, goes to Tottenham Court Road tube and gets the late-night train back out to Romford. I was in The Ship with Graham Wood from Tomato, his friend Claire and there was also this other guy. I remember staggering out of the loo, handing this guy a tenner and going, ‘Get a round in, mate.’ He looked at me with this kind of wide-eyed, quizzical expression and I staggered out the door onto the street. I remember he had a T-shirt with Bastard Bunny on it. I used to say for years, ‘Yeah, I was in The Ship drinking with Bastard Bunny.’ That’s all I could remember, apart from the expression on his face. One night I saw Bill Bailey doing his stand-up on TV and he did that face. I realised, ‘I was in the pub with Bill Bailey!’ I revealed this on Radio 4 once, and Bill happened to be listening to the show. He got in touch and went, ‘Yeah, that was me. I used to wear a Bastard Bunny T-shirt, because it said BB.’ He added, ‘Can I use this in my stand-up?’ I said, ‘Of course.’ It was good, because I was able to close the circle.”

MIKE MARSLAND/WIREIMAGE



Smith and Hyde with Darren Emerson, 1994

● would suddenly turn off and you’d pick up the conversation somewhere else. You had this wonderful juxtaposition. It was instant Dada. It’s the same method that he used on the railway journeys back to Romford, very late Friday night or Saturday morning, picking up these remarkable bits of sonic sculpture.”

Smith, meanwhile, admits to being “a bit obsessed with sound. The things that turn me on and make me want to run into a studio are not necessarily music. They’re visual things, stimulations – pictures, books, architecture.”

Recovering from the collapse of Underworld Mark I in the early ’90s, Smith’s growing interest in dance music led him to work with Darren Emerson, an up-and-coming DJ from Romford, where the band are still based. “The whole Karl/Rick/Underworld/Freur thing was history and separate,” says Smith. “When Darren and I started working together it was a good 18 months before we made anything that was even barely playable. Karl and I continued to slowly write and explore bits and pieces. He was obsessed with the same things that he always has been – singing, writing, making music. *Karlness*. There were times when it was very frustrating. We’d have this blinding instrumental and Karl would roll up. ‘I really want to sing!’ I’d think, ‘Oh, please. It doesn’t need a vocal.’ He wore me down by being clever and talented and open to being edited. I’m very grateful that from the ’90s on, he would let me reconstruct, recompose, reinvent his work. Stuff which for the previous decade, he’d have been very precious about.”

“Rick and Karl didn’t impress me when I first met them,” says Steve Hall, co-founder of the Junior Boy’s Own label and Underworld’s A&R since 1992. “This was the early ’90s and they looked out of step with what was going on. They were like two session musicians who’d met a DJ. As I got to know them better, I realised it was definitely something different. Karl and Rick have always struck me as gentle guys – hippies, almost – thoughtful about their art, their music and what they’re doing. They used to talk like musicians.

Now they’ve got older, they talk like geography teachers.”

THE PINNACLE OF the Hyde/Smith/Emerson iteration of Underworld is their 1994 album, *Dubnobasswithmyheadman*: a rich fusion of pulsing, electronic rhythms and minor-chord melodies overlaid with Hyde’s delirious, stream-of-consciousness lyrics. “There were two occasions

where alcohol became my muse,” admits Hyde. “At art school, I would carry notebooks with me, get utterly wasted and end up in some 24-hour drinking den, wake up the next day with these fantastic drawings and ideas, which I’d then turn into real artworks. I got a first and I thought, ‘A-ha!’ Years later, when Rick put this group together, I remember being advised by someone that if I was going to have any future at all, I was going to have to dig deep and find something different. I thought, ‘I know...’ I went to some very, very dark places, both physically and emotionally. Alcoholism is a very solitary place. The curious thing is, a year after I put it down – with some help – I realised it had been a suppressant.”

Hyde admits that initially he wasn’t keen to revisit the album for a series of anniversary shows in 2014: “Looking backwards” is “not something I enjoy”. All the same, it’s

possible that Hyde – who has been sober for 18 years – felt uncomfortable reconnecting with a highly creative period fuelled by alcohol. “Every night,” he admits. “‘Dark & Long’. Come on. ‘Dirty Epic’. That’s the one that often brings me to tears when we do it, because that’s hardcore for me. That’s broken, very broken.” Conversely, he views the band’s follow-up single, “Born Slippy”, as “the upside of it. It went horribly wrong, but that was my very complicated way of saying, ‘Will somebody please help me.’ Now, you just add water and it all comes back again. I feel grateful. We’re still here. I survived.”

Indeed, the ’90s were kind to Underworld. They hosted the 18-hour Experimental Sound Field mixed-media rave for 5,000 people at Glastonbury in 1992 (“Michael Eavis tried to close it down a number of times; so did the police,” laughs Hall). A key element in Danny Boyle’s film

Trainspotting, “Born Slippy” sold more than two million copies. Two further albums with Emerson, *Second Toughest In The Infants* and *Beaucoup Fish*, confirmed Underworld’s status as luminaries of UK techno. Emerson, however, left in 2000. “We were together over a decade,” says Smith. “Relationships changed, the dynamic changed. Things got tricky. Darren had enough. It wasn’t me that left. I can’t speak for him. But obviously things got too much for him, for whatever reason.”

RICK SMITH IS sanguine about the albums Underworld made in the 2000s – *A Hundred Days Off* (2002), *Oblivion With Bells* (2007) and *Barking* (2010). “I most often hate records I’ve made within an hour of them being finished,” he says breezily. “It’s a bit of a problem for me, as you can imagine. So there’s plenty of

“Karl and Rick have always been gentle – hippies, almost”

STEVE HALL

material in the past couple of decades that I'm not that fond of, or would reinvent at the drop of a hat. With *A Hundred Days Off*, for instance, I lost the plot, spending way too much time exploring tech, sound-related stuff that was very interesting but ultimately resulted in not very satisfying music. But there are some little jewels on those records."

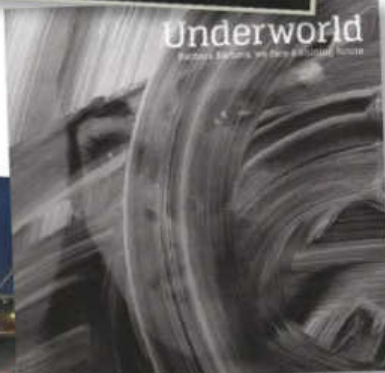
After *Barking*, Hyde and Smith embarked on a number of different projects – some together, some separate. They devised the soundtrack for the National Theatre's 2011 production of *Frankenstein*, directed by Danny Boyle. Meanwhile, Hyde made a film – and album – called *The Outer Edges*, a Patrick Keiller-esque travelogue through the Essex hinterlands – "the twilight zone on the edge of the city". He also made two albums with Brian Eno. Meanwhile, Smith scored the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games. Understandably, Smith still talks excitedly about his experiences working on the Games, "guiding a thousand drummers on the night, talking to them in their ear pieces as the Industrial Revolution unfolded..."

"It's remarkable, to make that work, at that level, live," notes John Warwicker. "The pressure and the number of voices you're listening to would drive anyone screaming and running away from that. I have immense admiration for Rick's ability to make it good. It almost kills him. He's an absolute obsessive."

After these marvellous adventures apart, Hyde and Smith reconvened 18 months ago to begin work on *Barbara Barbara, We Face A Shining Future*. On this



Hyde and Smith in their studio, 2015



Uncut meets Hyde the day after the death of Colin Vearncombe in a car accident. Best known as Black, the musician was another founder member of the Tomato collective. "He was the calm voice," says Hyde. "He would listen for a bit and then he would speak very calmly and clearly: 'I don't understand why you don't just do this...'

You needed that – a bit of grounding."

Does this make you consider your own legacy?

"God, no. I just look at the clock and go, 'Come on, we've got a lot to do.' Right now, every day feels like another free gift."

"During our 36 years together, Rick and I have done amazing things," continues Hyde. "Having said that, throughout everything, the astonishing thing is that Rick stuck with me. He's a bloody-minded Welshman. Once he gets his mind to something, there's no shaking him. I think the pair of us just realised that, whatever happened, going back to Screen Gemz, we didn't actually have to like each other. We just had to stay together." ☺



The Industrial Revolution at the London Olympics 2012 Opening Ceremony, scored by Rick Smith

occasion, however, there were rules. "We would start each day with something fresh," says Smith. "The day would be an island, a thing in itself. Whatever we made that day was what it was. Then we'd move on."

"It felt like my romantic memory of *Dubnobass...*," adds Hyde. "There are tracks on *Dubnobass...* where Rick and I were in the studio recording together. But most of what has happened over all the albums since is that Rick and I maybe only recorded a vocal or a bit of guitar together. And progressively, less and less. So this was the two of us doing something that we said we'd always do: be in the studio together, in the moment, improvising."

Smith estimates he and Hyde recorded "about 30 or 40 pieces" for the album. Lincoln Barrett, who co-produced *Barbara...*, describes Smith as a "film director", who controls and shapes the artistic aspect of each project. "The thing I learnt from him is that each track should feel like a moment, that you've captured something. Rick's approach is one of not letting technology and equipment get in the way of your artistic process. Try to keep things as simple as possible."

"Rick is organised, he sees plans," notes Hyde. "I'm sure when he wakes up in the morning he sees the grid, like *Tron*, sparkling out in front of him. Me, I wake up and go: 'What's this? Who put that here? This is great! What's my name?'"

BUYER'S GUIDE



DUBNOBASS WITH MY HEADMAN

JUNIOR BOY'S OWN, 1994

9/10

Breakthrough singles "Mmm... Skyscraper I Love You" and "Cowgirl" rub shoulders with "Dark & Long" and "Dirty Epic". Sprawling, fluid, innovative and powerful.



SECOND TOUGHEST IN THE INFANTS

JUNIOR BOY'S OWN, 1996

8/10

Same club-heavy punch ("Rowla", "Pearl's Girl"), but the textures are subtler ("Blueski", "Stagger"). Reissues included non-album single "Born Slippy".



EVERYTHING EVERYTHING

JUNIOR BOY'S OWN, 2000

8/10

This robust live album from the *Beaucoup Fish* tour also included a companion DVD given the full Tomato multi-media

treatment. Breathless opener "Juanita" sets the pace.



OBLIVION WITH BELLS

JUNIOR BOY'S OWN, 2007

7/10

Invoking the epic glories of their '90s heyday ("Crocodile", "Beautiful Burnout"), their seventh reflects more subdued, ambient leanings, closer to their soundtrack work.



SUNSHINE

FOX MUSIC, 2008

8/10

Soundtrack to Danny Boyle's sci-fi thriller, this showcases Underworld's ambient qualities. Their *Frankenstein* OST is also recommended.



Cillian Murphy in Sunshine



© BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS

We shall gather at *The River*:
(l-r) Clarence Clemons,
Bruce Springsteen, Gary
Tallent and Steven Van
Zandt in Uniondale, Long
Island, December 31, 1980



THE TIES THAT STILL BIND

Thirty-seven years ago, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND convened in a New Jersey farmhouse, to begin work on a new LP. The great songs came unrelentingly: "You kinda give up and enjoy the ride," says Steve Van Zandt. "We could've been recording that thing forever." What emerged, eventually, was a landmark double album – *The River* – and, now, a radically expanded version – *The Ties That Bind* – plus a celebratory American tour. *Uncut* finds them back in NJ and hears exclusively from the surviving E-Streeters about growing up and sticking together

Interview: Jason Anderson
Photo: Brooks Kraft

Springsteen with (from left) Nils Lofgren and Jake Clemons on The River Tour 2016



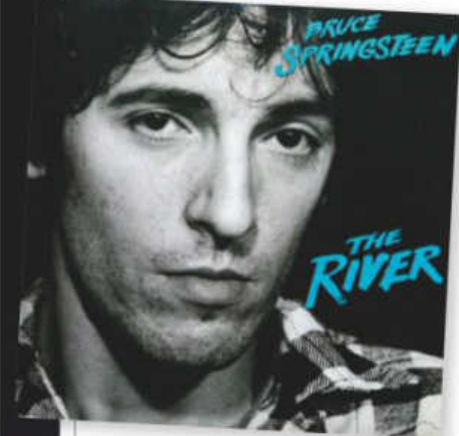
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, THERE isn't room for more than one Bruce Springsteen at the centre of the stage in a Newark, New Jersey, hockey arena. But if you can buy the notion that there could be two, you can see that what really transpires on this unusually boisterous Sunday evening is a conversation that transcends the usual temporal limitations.

First, there's the Bruce you can't see up there, though you can spy him on the faux-vintage T-shirts at the merch stand. He's the stubble-faced firebrand who first wrote most of tonight's songs while struggling to imagine a life for himself as a full-grown man with adult responsibilities and a richer understanding of the world. It was the real world he wanted to know about, rather than the one he'd romanticised so vividly ever since he began knocking around in high-school bands in nearby Freehold, NJ, and roaming the boardwalks of Asbury Park.

His quest to reach all these things will transform his songwriting and make him a bigger star than he could possibly imagine – or desire. As his longtime ally Steven Van Zandt tells *Uncut*, “This is Bruce at his absolute peak of being in touch with that mysterious thing – nobody really know what it comes from. Some people just get in touch with it for a while. Dylan had it for seven albums. The Beatles and the Stones had these incredible three or four album runs. Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry – the great ones had it. One day, they're working hard, working hard, trying to perfect their craft, working on it song by song. And then if you stay at it and you get a little bit lucky, you just tap into that river of energy that allows all these other songs to come tumbling out. That's what happened, man.”

Then there's the other Springsteen, the strong-jawed guy in the black boots, dark waistcoat and jeans. A proud husband and father of three, he looks nowhere near his official age of 66 thanks to the fighting-fit physique and enviably full head of hair.

He exudes no lack of confidence or exuberance throughout the three-hour-plus performance that follows – he even crowd-surfs during “Hungry Heart”, albeit carefully enough to avoid straining his back or those of his carriers. Yet this latterday Springsteen begins the proceedings in a wistful mood. Delivered after the opening salvo of “Meet Me In The City”, his introductory spiel varies



only slightly from night to night on the classic-album-live-plus-hits extravaganza known as The River Tour 2016. The singer reflects on the younger self's determination to write his way into

that life he wanted, all while doing right by the bandmates who came along for the ride.

"By the time I got to *The River*," he says onstage in Newark's Verizon Center, "I'd taken notice of the things that bond people to their lives – work, commitments, families, love. I wanted to imagine and write about those things. I figured if I could write about them, maybe I'd get one step closer to having them in my own life."

"Bruce has always been a humanistic writer," says pianist Roy Bittan a few days before the show. "And as he progressed through the years, he's taken on different aspects of the human condition, the things that affect people's lives and the decisions that people make that affect other people. He's continually expanded his explorations into what happens to people as their lives move along."

Thirty-seven years have passed since Springsteen hunkered down in a rented farmhouse on Telegraph Hill Road in Holmdel, NJ – less than 40 miles from here – to write material for his fifth album. He was free and clear for a few months. The *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* tour had wrapped on the first night of 1979 and much of the E Street Band were busy working with Ian Hunter in a new studio in New York.

Setting out with his notebook, guitar and cassette recorder, he had a long mental list of the things he wanted people to hear in the album he envisioned. "I wanted a record that contained fun, dancing, laughter, jokes, politics, sex, good comradeship, love, faith, lonely nights and, of course, tears," he says now.

All seemed like crucial components of the younger Springsteen's desire to connect with the "broader community" after years as a self-styled outsider. Riding through mansions of glory on suicide machines was all fine and good when you're 25. But the world of grown-up challenges and compromises was what most interested the songwriter as he neared 30.

Now, Springsteen wanted to find a way in, no matter how much work it took – and it got done the hard way. Then again, the hard way was the only way to make a record for Springsteen and the E Street Band. "They always turned into arduous processes," laments Bittan. "It's not like he wrote 12 songs, we recorded 12 songs and we put out a record."

The product of an 18-month marathon of music-making that yielded many more great songs than the 20 that filled the album's four sides, *The River* finally arrived on shelves in October, 1980. At no point was there a guarantee he'd get where he wanted to go – or, for that matter, that anyone would much care besides the faithful coterie of admirers. That fanbase had yet to swell in size to the Broooce-chanting, stadium-filling hordes of the *Born In The USA* era.

Yet tonight's performance on almost-home turf – Springsteen's mother, Adele, and sister Ginny are among the many relatives here and the Boss laughs as he watches his mom cut a rug to "Ramrod" – is a powerful affirmation of just how much he succeeded. Here was – and is – a record that felt like real life and like a great rock'n'roll show, two things that don't converge nearly as often as they ought to.

Riveting and raucous, the performances that *Uncut* witnesses in Newark and earlier that weekend in

"On The River, I wrote about the things that bond people to their lives"

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Washington DC prove that just as surely as those youthful ambitions were within his reach, Springsteen and the E Street Band have all the vigour and stamina they need to honour that achievement in the here and now.

Max Weinberg admits his strategy for these shows is to forget about pacing himself and go full throttle. "You get your aches and pains," says the drummer, who turns 65 in April. "The next morning, I might look like Nick Nolte in *North Dallas Forty* when he gets out of bed, but during the show I'm like a 15-year-old kid – I'm just going for it."

Of course, given all the toil, trouble and towers of multi-track tapes it took to get here, it's a wonder these challenges only demanded the work of two Bruces and not an army.

"It got done by sheer willpower, just like it did in Bruce's entire career," says Van Zandt with a raspy chuckle. "Why should this be any different?"

FOR A WORK that carries an aura of hard labour and brow-furrowing pensiveness, *The River* sure is wild at times. Thunderous renditions of "The Ties That

'DON'T JUST PLAY CHORDS'

E Street pianist Roy Bittan on working with Bowie and Bruce

"I ALWAYS DID studio work, even before I joined Bruce. Working with other artists was intellectually stimulating and challenging. To go in with somebody else and be presented with a different set of circumstances was a way for me to stretch. I have an eclectic, diverse kind of background, anyway. The band was always my first priority, but it was important for me to break out and do whatever I could elsewhere – I always felt like it helped me bring something fresh back to the band."

"Working with David was a particularly fantastic experience and I was really lucky to work on *Station To Station* and *Scary Monsters*, two really great records of his. David allowed for a lot of freedom, which is one of the reasons I think he asked me to come record. He was looking for people to always add something to his music and help develop an idea."

"When I recorded with him on *Station To Station*, the first thing he wanted me to play on was 'TVC 15'. He said to me, 'Hey, can you do like a Professor Longhair thing on this song?' I was like, 'Professor Longhair? This Brit is asking me

about Professor Longhair?' I was really taken aback."

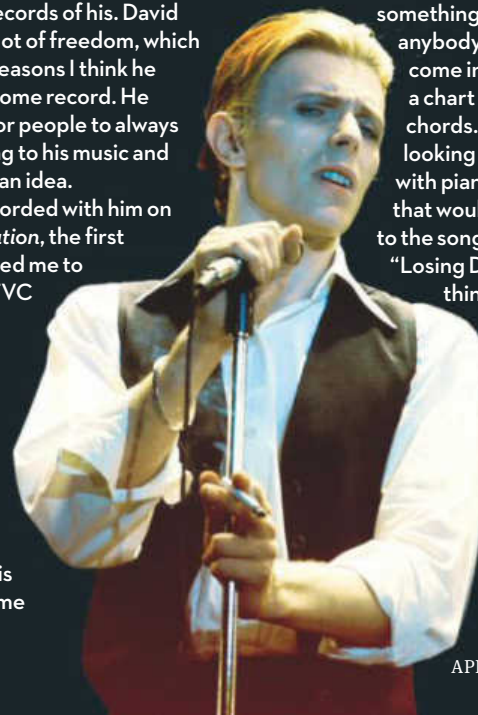
"The funny thing was that literally three weeks before that session, we had been in Houston and Garry Tallent and I had seen in the paper that Professor Longhair was playing in some roadhouse outside of town. So we went to this place and Longhair was sitting at an upright piano and playing in this little club – it was fantastic. So when David asked me to do that, it was a very fortuitous moment and very surprising."

"But he would often give you some kind of abstract comment or ask you to do something strange. On 'Ashes To Ashes', he asked me to play something over that little chord progression in the beginning that sounds very weird. There's like a vibrato on that melody."

"He was always looking to do that kind of thing. Bruce allowed for plenty of freedom, too. Bruce would play the song for the band and then let the band play. Of course, sometimes he would say, 'I have this riff I want you to play.' Sometimes I would just come up with

something. I don't think anybody ever asked me to come in the studio to read a chart and just play the chords. They were always looking for me to come up with piano arrangements that would become integral to the song."

"Losing David is such a sad thing. We did 'Rebel Rebel' that one night [in Chicago on *The River Tour 2016*] and then Bruce did 'Take It Easy' for Glenn Frey. I wish everybody would stop dying so we could stop doing tributes."



JOHN LYNN KIRK/RED FERNS

Two hearts:
Springsteen
rehearses with
Steve Van Zandt
in Holmdel, New
Jersey, 1978



“Bruce always constructs his albums with a strong idea of a sequence”

ROY BITTAN

© LYNN GOLDSMITH/AS400 DB/CORBIS;
ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



Springsteen, Clarence Clemons and Roy Bittan at the Winterland Arena in San Francisco, December 1978

“Bind”, “Jackson Cage” and “Out In The Streets” lend serious momentum to the first hour of the two that the show devotes to its contents. After those surges of exultation come more muted album standouts like “Point Blank”, a sorrowful portrait of a man brought low by his lover’s drug addiction. Then comes another 90 minutes of often inspired choices – a charged duet between Springsteen and wife, Patti Scialfa, on “Tougher Than The Rest” in DC, a stirring “Atlantic City” in Newark – along with set staples like “Dancing In The Dark”, “Born To Run” and the requisite “Rosalita”.

The demands of the shows are both considerable and just part of the job, as *Uncut* learns in interviews with the four E Streeters who were there for the album’s tumultuous creation. They’re back to revisit this terrain for the first time since the only other complete performance of *The River* in 2009 – at Madison Square Garden, one of several full-album performances they played at the tail end of the Working On A Dream tour. “Everybody loved that,” says Bittan of that night. “Of course, Bruce has always constructed his albums from start to finish with a very strong idea of a sequence, as people did in the old days – before you had shuffle!”

The expenditure of energy and degree of finesse at the Newark and Washington stops are all the more impressive given that the E Street Band weren’t expecting to tour this winter. “It came out of the blue,” says Van Zandt, who co-produced *The River* with Springsteen and his manager, Jon Landau. “It started off

with him saying we’re gonna do a *Saturday Night Live* appearance and that was it. Then he called back and said, ‘Maybe we’ll do a few shows.’ That was good news, very good news. Then a few shows turned into a tour.”

The only present-day member who played in the first versions of the E Street Band in 1971, bassist Garry Tallent found out about those latest plans by accident. He got tipped off by a booking-agent friend who was helping set up some dates in support of Tallent’s first solo album, a tight collection of 1950s-style rock and R’n’B entitled *Break Time*. “I’m in a little bit of shock,” he admits. Like guitarist Nils Lofgren, he had to hastily reschedule a slate of previously booked solo dates. “For the most part, people understand,” says Tallent. “I’ve been in the same band for close to 50 years so they know my first allegiance is to that.”

Nor is there any doubting the allegiance of the fans, who bought tickets swiftly enough to sell out the first set of dates within minutes of going on sale in December. They fill the time waiting outside in the cold by trading reports of shows elsewhere on the tour. The first date in Pittsburgh gets the thumbs up, though many fans’ travel plans were derailed when the first Madison Square Garden show was postponed after a blizzard struck the American East Coast. Asking about lifetime tallies of Bruce concerts is a useful conversation starter. A 40-timer in a T-shirt for the E Street Band’s 2000 reunion tour laments that Springsteen just doesn’t play enough for his 20-year-old son to be able to rack up a respectable number. Another fondly recalls an almost five-hour show at Giants Stadium but

swears he's lost count of the rest – "I've been at this for 40 years," he says in a Bruce Willis grumble.

Once inside, the luckiest ticket holders fill what's affectionately known as "the pit" – Springsteen fans with floor access have no need for chairs. They bellow the lyrics and pump their fists with all the expected bravado. Of course, you'd expect nothing less from the younger dudes who've arrived in full Boss In The USA garb of red bandana, sunglasses, blue denim vest and black leather jacket. In Newark, half the crowd seems to know each other. As that younger Springsteen knew when he set out on this stage in his journey, good comradeship can take you a long way.

Shorn of the horn sections and backup choirs of the Wrecking Ball and High Hopes tours, the 10-member incarnation of the E Street Band includes relative newbies like saxophonist Jake Clemons – 35-year-old nephew of Clarence, who passed away in 2011 – and organist Charles Giordano, who replaced keyboardist Danny Federici after he died in 2008. Violinist and guitarist Soozie Tyrell has been part of the E Street orbit since the early '90s – though her NJ pedigree includes plenty of time spent with Southside Johnny and singing in an early group with Scialfa. As for the rest of the 10 players arranged in two rows in the show's spare presentation – no backdrop, only three modest-sized screens hanging from the rafters; even the reliably flamboyant Van Zandt is largely dressed in shades of grey – it's very much the same band that made *The River*.

Max Weinberg's no-holds-barred approach certainly seems like the preferred strategy for the entire ensemble. Yet it's easy to hear how the fires raging here were used to forge something special, something essential to the man's artistic longevity. While *Born To Run* marked the first great breakthrough five years earlier, *The River* represents the period when Springsteen fully became Springsteen *in toto*. That is, the one that would weather all the pressures that came with the success of *Born In The USA* and subsequently matures into one of American music's most dependably thoughtful artists. This is the point where he bids farewell to the Jersey Shore bohemian of *The Wild*, *The Innocent* & *The E Street Shuffle*, the wild-hearted tramp of *Born To Run* and the terse, tense tough guy of *Darkness At The Edge Of Town*. But instead of driving further into the badlands, he steers into the mainstream of American life and culture.

A sign of the more politically engaged sensibility that was emerging in his work, "The River" itself was one of many songs that touch on the hardships of the Carter recession. It gave Americans a bitter early taste of what Van Zandt calls "the permanent depression" that now envelops much of the heartland. In the documentary included with *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*, Springsteen calls the song "my touchstone for all of that writing that came later, where you simply step into a character's shoes and try

PUNK, POLITICS AND THE RIVER

How Springsteen's fifth album crossed a cultural divide

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN HAD been buying up punk singles as they hit the streets of New York since the recording of *Darkness At The Edge Of Town*. By the time of *The River*, he and the E Street Band had forged alliances with many of the acts to break out of CBGB, including the Patti Smith Group (who scored their sole hit with the *Darkness...* outtake "Because The Night" in 1978) and the Ramones ("Hungry Heart" was born when Joey Ramone asked Springsteen to write them a song). In early 1980, Springsteen would often visit Martin Rev and Alan Vega of Suicide, who were recording an album next door to his gang at the Power Station. The Boss would frequently declare his love for "Frankie Teardrop" from Suicide's debut album and repeatedly performed a cover of "Dream Baby Dream".

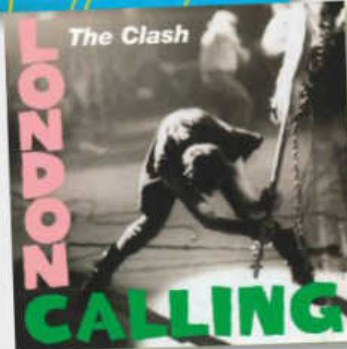
If that influence is not necessarily front and centre amid the rock 'n' roll, R'n'B and folk elements of *The River*, the unruly energy is unmistakable in many of the songs that didn't make the cut. At least it was to Max Weinberg's son Jay, a fellow drummer who filled in for his dad in the E Street Band on the 2009 tour and now plays with Slipknot.

"I sent him a box set and he listened to 'Held Up Without A Gun,'" says the elder Weinberg of one of the highest-velocity outtakes. "He said, 'Dad, you guys were a punk band.' If you listen to that, we clearly were."

By that time Springsteen had also formed something of a mutual admiration society with The Clash. The arrival of *London Calling* at the end of 1979 evidently strengthened his belief in the rightness of releasing a double album of his own.

"The two bands were very passionate," says Steven Van Zandt. "I don't think being passionate has ever really been fashionable, know what I mean? Passion always seemed to be a

Patti Smith in 1978, the year her band had a hit with Springsteen's "Because The Night"



little bit of an outlier quality, a freaky sort of emotion. People are either afraid or too insecure to commit, or just not particularly enthusiastic about life. You don't really hear passion that often, not serious passion."

Van Zandt sees a kinship in regards to how both those watershed double albums sought to

capture the bleak economic and social realities of their respective environments. The irony, he notes, is that *The River*'s bitter subtext about the dashed hopes and vastly diminished expectations of working-class Americans may have greater resonance in the country of 2016 than in its original context at the dawn of Reaganite triumphalism.

"That's one reason why punk music never caught on in America," he says. "The English guys politicised it immediately, but it never really quite caught on in America because things weren't quite that bad as they were in England. Reagan and his 'Morning in America' thing was about to happen and everybody was like, 'I'm gonna be happy now!'"

"The album is more relevant now because we now seem to have found ourselves in a permanent depression economically. Slowly, slowly it's dawning on people that we have now really devolved into a class structure that is more similar to England's history than ours. We always did have an upper class and a lower class, of course, but not to the extent we do now. So now all those class struggles in England that The Clash or the Pistols presented have come to roost here."



Springsteen with Van Zandt and Patti Scialfa during The River 2016 tour at Chicago's United Center, January 19, 2016

to get the listener to walk in those shoes for a while.”

The Newark crowd turns it into the most mournful of the night’s many singalongs. He dedicates it to his sister Ginny, whose experiences were his inspiration. She was also there when he debuted it at Madison Square Garden in a Musicians United For Safe Energy anti-nuke show in September, 1979. It became her favourite song, but as she later told Springsteen biographer Peter Ames Carlin, that first encounter left her feeling “completely exposed”.

The other key song of the period was “Hungry Heart”, originally recorded that June with backup harmonies by Flo & Eddie of The Turtles. His first Top 10 single in America – and perhaps the biggest reason *The River* became his first No 1 record – it signalled that he was no longer averse to the idea of having hits. Much to the relief of the bandmates, who saw him give away sure things to Patti Smith with “Because The Night” and the Pointer Sisters with “Fire”.

In fact, “Hungry Heart” nearly went to the Ramones, Springsteen having written the song after seeing them play the Fast Lane in Asbury Park in March. “That was really weird, it doesn’t sound anything like a Ramones song,” admits Bob Clearmountain, the producer and engineer whose mix of the song appears on *The River* (albeit with a sped-up vocal track). Nevertheless, those two songs were critical. The first, a pivotal example of the more character-based writing that would become fundamental to his practice; the other, a harbinger of his impending era as the world’s biggest rock star.

Van Zandt believes the period marks “a big breakthrough” in his friend’s writing, partially because he found his comfort zone within an identifiably rock template. “It’s easier to be original than to compete in an existing genre, understand?” says Van Zandt. “People think, ‘Oh, it’s such a big deal to be original.’ As a songwriter, I can tell you it’s not that difficult to be original. What’s difficult is writing in an existing genre and keeping your identity. In that period, his writing started to become very pop/rock-oriented in a really good way, in a substantial way. All of a sudden, every single thing sounds like it belongs on the radio and yet it never lost the identity of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. That was just a monumental development.”

So by all accounts, the troubles with *The River* weren’t a matter of getting great writing out of Springsteen. The challenge was getting him to stop writing.

IN THE THRONG of freezing fans lined up outside the Washington show, *Uncut* meets a Bruce fan in a red cap whose decades-long tally of E Street concerts started with the DC stop for The River tour in 1980. “My kids think I’m cool,” he says, clearly happy to give them a reason. He remembers being startled at the immediate impact of “Hungry Heart” at that show. “It was everywhere on the radio,” he says. “The album was barely out but he pointed the mic to the crowd and let them sing it because they knew all the words already.” That was a far cry from the chillier reception his Springsteen-loving friends gave to *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* a few years before. “That record was great, of course, but it took a few years for us to know that.”

With its film-noir-inspired mood of desolation, *Darkness...* was hardly the album that would help Springsteen regain momentum lost during a two-year court battle with former manager, Mike Appel. The album’s release in June, 1978 prompted another wave of acclaim. But sales were weaker than they’d been for *Born To Run*, despite a dogged touring policy to counteract a recording ban imposed during the

Inside the Power Station, 1979 (engineer Neil Dorfsman, second right): Below: replica ‘Bossenheimer Jones’ notebook, included in the *River* boxset



“Bruce’s writing started to become very pop/rock-oriented in a really good way”
STEVEN VAN ZANDT

lawsuit. As revealed by Thom Zimny’s documentary for 2010’s *The Promise: The Darkness At The Edge Of Town Story*, that edgy disposition reflected the tough circumstances of its creation over many frustrating months in the Record Plant in New York. “Every single day, it was a fucking struggle,” is how Van Zandt puts it now.

Much of the pain resulted from the fundamental conflict between the sterile recording methodology that was the standard of the 1970s and the team’s efforts to convey the energy of the performances. Says Tallent, “For forever, it was like, ‘Ah, you gotta see them live – you can’t go by the records.’ That was always the scuttlebutt up until *The River*.”

The other thing weighing on Springsteen’s mind in early ’79 was the changes that he noticed in his compatriots, who now felt a pull towards the adult world. As Springsteen explains in the new doc, “You gotta understand that the band at that time was not very grown-up, in the sense that people were just starting to get married and have their kids.”

Springsteen’s father, Doug, had moved with his mother, Adele, and younger sister, Pamela, to California back in 1969, leaving the singer feeling further adrift. He wanted to understand the mysteries of whatever it was that made for viable relationships and careers. All those things, in other words, that became the ties that bind people to their lives. “Those are the questions Bruce was asking,” says Weinberg. “How does one find that? And more specifically, how do I find that?”



“PEOPLE WOULD GET MUGGED ONCE IN A WHILE!”

Bob Clearmountain on how *The River* found a home at the Power Station

“WE OPENED THE studio in the summer of '77. I produced a couple of punk bands with Tony Bongiovi, who was one of the owners [and the cousin of Jon Bon Jovi]. Then I did this album for Ian Hunter called *You're Never Alone With A Schizophrenic*, and he hired Max, Danny and Garry for his band. They were really impressed with the studio. Max said, 'I'm gonna tell Bruce about this place - he's gonna start another album and he should come over here.' Sure enough, they came over a couple of months later.



“They'd tried to play live at the Record Plant but they ended up doing massive amounts of overdubs just to sound the way they wanted - they had to artificially make it sound like a band all playing together.

“It was always a struggle for them getting the sounds they wanted and it was so easy [at the Power Station]. Not only that, but we'd designed it so you could have the drums out in the big live room and have all these different rooms. Everybody could see everybody else so there was always visual communication. It was perfect for what they wanted to do.

“They recorded most of *Born In The USA* at the Power Station, too. When I mixed that, a lot of the mixes were just about balancing them. It was so easy to mix because it was a live band playing in the studio so they kinda balanced each other.

“The only part I was involved in with *The River* was recording those first two songs [“Roulette” and “The Ties That Bind”] and doing that first group of mixes. I had to move on because I had some other projects to do,

so I handed it off to my friend Neil Dorfsman and he recorded it all.

“They spent a couple of months making the record, then we mixed it. The odd part was going back and spending another year on it. They kept to themselves pretty much. They had Studio A every day for a long time and that was the biggest room in the Power Station. They had a pretty big lounge there.

“The neighbourhood it was in was still considered Hell's Kitchen. It was getting better, but it was a little rough. People would get mugged once in a while. I never did, which is nice!

“It was funny because I was doing a live record with the Stones there and Jagger would usually leave at, like, 3am. I figured he had a driver waiting outside. One night I said to him, ‘You have a driver, right?’

“He goes, ‘No, I go up to 9th and grab a cab.’

“I said, ‘Really? At 3 or 4 in the morning?’ We lived right near each other in the Upper West Side. I'd say, ‘How about we leave together? I'll share a cab with you.’ I was really worried about Mick Jagger being out in this rough neighbourhood at 3am. Didn't seem to bother him much, though.”



The E Street Band in Detroit, October 1980, the month *The River* was released

Springsteen found inspiration by listening to Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and other country artists whose music had the smalltown feel and adult concerns he wanted to convey. Even so, his trove of new songs contained a formidable number of bona-fide rock'n'roll songs. That was a happy discovery for the E Streeters as they began rehearsals at the Telegraph Hill property. Eager to avoid the agonies of the *Darkness...* process, Springsteen hoped that by presenting the band with relatively complete demos, they could learn them fast and make an album in a far more efficient manner.

Fresh from their time there backing Ian Hunter on *You're Never Alone With A Schizophrenic*, Bittan, Weinberg and Tallent all had good things to say about the Power Station, a studio in NYC's Hell's Kitchen. "They had been working at the Record Plant, which is a typical office-building studio—low ceilings and extremely dead-sounding," says Bob Clearmountain. "It was a famous studio and Lennon did a lot of records there, but the Power Station was really a departure from that type of studio. It was very live. We were

"Often we'd record something and Bruce would go, 'Nah, that's not quite right'"

MAX WEINBERG

into getting big sounds. I was into Led Zeppelin so was going after that kinda thing. They just loved it."

"Roulette" was the first song they cut and mixed when sessions began there in March. Written within days of the meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in nearby Pennsylvania, Springsteen's song sharply evokes the panic and terror in the accident's aftermath. Weinberg was instructed to do his best Keith Moon; he delivered. In what felt like no time at all, they had a potential Springsteen classic in the can. Says Van Zandt, "We were like, 'OK, man, we're off to a good start here!'"

It never even made it on the record. Many more songs that were just as good or better would suffer the same fate. Several also dated back to the *Darkness...* sessions or tours. A moving vignette based on his late-night conversations with Doug in the darkened kitchen of the family home in Freehold, "Independence Day" was one of many older songs

that competed for attention with the new material that poured out of him day after day.

"The actual recording process went very quickly," says Weinberg. "It's the writing that took a long time. He would sit working, working, working to come up with a song he could stand. Very often he would bring something in, we'd record it and he'd be like, 'Nah, that's not quite right,' and we'd go back into the lounge and he'd start writing again. In those days, we were together 24/7—or certainly 24/5—so if he had an idea, he had a band there to try it out."

Says Bittan, "We'd work on songs and then he'd come back a couple of days later and maybe there'd be a different section or different music. He was always striving to find the best musical foundation for what he was trying to say."

The pianist remembers hearing songs such as "Night Fires" and "Where The Bands Are" and thinking, "Put that out tomorrow and it'll be a No 1 hit!" But Springsteen was wary of taking the path of least resistance. "Anything that comes that easy and that spontaneously makes him uncomfortable," says Bittan. "The ones that he really dug

HOW TO BUY BRUCE'S BOXES



LIVE/ 1975-85

1986

Released at the height of Springsteen-

mania in the mid-'80s, this four-disc compendium was a blockbuster of the Christmas shopping season (and a second-hand-store staple not long thereafter). Fans were right to grumble over the preponderance of recent tracks over previously unreleased live-show staples. But "Because The Night" and "Fire" still burn brightly in their first officially sanctioned appearances, and the five-song sequence recorded in July 1978 in Hollywood captures the E Street Band at its most incendiary.

8/10



TRACKS

1998

Springsteen's trove of unreleased songs topped 350 by the time he and longtime engineer

8/10

Toby Scott started sifting through three decades' worth of tapes for this four-disc collection of demos, B-sides, rarities and others that got lost along the way. As always, there are notable omissions (no sign of the fabled 'Electric Nebraska'), but the grungiest bootleg staples benefit greatly from the TLC—Springsteen even enlisted drummer Vini Lopez to re-record parts for "Thundercrack", a spirited outtake from *The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle*. Confusingly, the condensed single-disc version adds three essentials not on the big box: "Trouble River", "The Fever" and "The Promise".

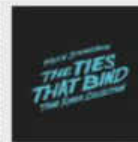


THE PROMISE: THE DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN STORY

2010

10/10

This 2010 Grammy winner is like a lovingly crafted objet d'art, albeit one with an appropriate air of Springsteen-ian scruffiness. Three CDs and three DVDs (or Blu-rays) came nested inside a facsimile of the coiled notebooks where Springsteen typically scribbled his ideas and lyrics. Though it documents one of the band's toughest times, the music collected here burns with a spirit of vitality and defiance. That's equally true of both the huge assortment of *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* outtakes and the live recording of the full-album performance at Asbury Park's Paramount Theatre in 2009.



THE TIES THAT BIND: THE RIVER COLLECTION

2015

9/10

Steve Van Zandt's claim that *The River* could've been a great quadruple album is dead on the money. Again, Springsteen risks the ire of purists by recording new vocals for several outtakes, but the results are consistently thrilling, as is the concert film that's been newly constituted from the four-camera shoot at Tempe in November, 1980. The thick book of photos and mementoes adds yet more value to Springsteen's second must-have archival set of recent years. So how about that 'Electric Nebraska' next?



Cover star: Springsteen on the boardwalk near the Empress Hotel in Asbury Park, August 1979—the shot made the sleeve of the “Hungry Heart” single

deep down and really worked at and made sure that everything was just exactly right, those are the ones that he prefers to make part of his legacy.”

Given his predilections, all agree it was a miracle that Springsteen opted to keep “Hungry Heart” — albeit “with much lobbying on the part of everybody”, according to Tallent. It made the cut — in fact, it made the cut twice. By late summer, 10 songs were culled from the 24 that had been recorded. After being mixed by Clearmountain, they were submitted to Columbia for a single album to be released under the title of *The Ties That Bind*. Instead, Springsteen changed his mind.

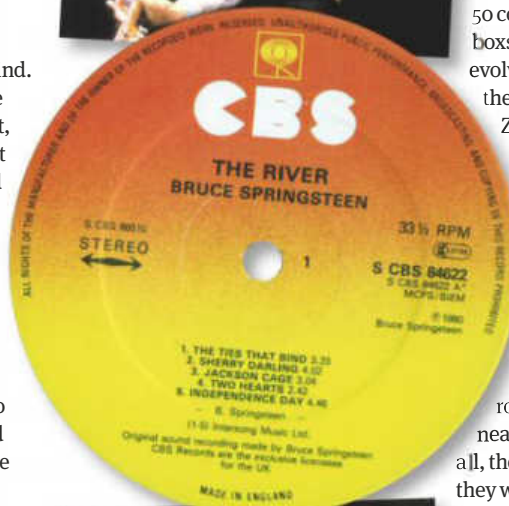
“We were surprised when we went back in the studio,” says Bittan. “For us it was always about, ‘Well, whatever is happening is happening.’ But it is a little unnerving after you work on a record then you find out, ‘Wait a second, it’s not coming out?’”

As Springsteen says in the documentary, “I needed more time to let in all of the colours and feelings that I wanted to let in.”

“More time” turned out to mean another year. Along the way, it became clear that the single album had to be a double. “Bruce stuck to his guns,” says Van Zandt. “And Columbia, God bless ‘em, said OK. In spite of the fact that double albums were a lot more expensive to produce.”

As work continued through the rest of 1979 and deep into 1980, he’d have no shortage of candidates to fill the second LP. “We had this pile of multi-track tapes in the office at the Power Station that was known as Mount Springsteen,” says Clearmountain. “We had to move desks for it.” Tallent remembers someone making the tapes into a living room. “They made a couch and a table and a chair — I think there was even a lamp.”

The larger canvas meant that Springsteen could finally find space for both the more ruminative set pieces such as “Point Blank” and the lustier likes of



“Sherry Darling” and other songs that possessed the party-hearty vibe that made the shows so exhilarating. Even so, figuring out the balance of elements was a further set of headaches as spring rolled around and it came time to cut it down to size. “We were all given pieces of paper and made suggestions as to what the album should be,” says Tallent. “I would always go toward the more pop kind of thing, like ‘Be True’. I would always lose out.”

By the count of engineer Neil Dorfman, there were 50 complete songs in the can. Twenty-two appear on the boxset, plus the two (“Cindy” and “Be True”, which had evolved from the earlier “Mary Lou”) that made it onto the single LP, only to be replaced. Nowadays, Van Zandt is sanguine about the fate of all the greats that became outtakes. “On the one hand, every one of those songs is a lost argument,” he says. “But looking back now, there’s not a whole lotta songs I’d want to replace on *The River*.”

Keeping with Springsteen tradition, the process had been laborious, protracted and expensive. At one point, CBS boss Walter Yetnikoff dropped by to remind them that the \$1 million cost for studio time was coming out of Springsteen’s future royalties, not his company’s coffers. But it wasn’t nearly as torturous as their spell in the *Darkness*.... After all, they were holed up in a studio where they got the sound they wanted and with a prolific songwriter in full stride. “You kinda give up and enjoy the ride,” Van Zandt explains. “You say, ‘Fuck it — this thing is not gonna stop. Can it be a triple disc? A quadruple disc?’ I mean, it’s a legitimate four-disc album. We would’ve beat George Harrison’s three. Everything sounded great every day. We could’ve been recording that thing forever and just enjoyed it — at least until the money ran out.”

WITH ITS SIZE, heft and diversity of themes and approaches, *The River* had all the hallmarks of a major work, one that managed to attain a novelistic richness without easily

JOEL BERNSTEIN



A still from *The Ties That Bind* documentary

ceding its mysteries. Hearing the songs performed in their original order – and with the dynamism of the performances at Newark and Washington – the interconnections between the characters, voices and scenarios become starker. Even the inclusion of “Crush On You” – which the Boss often names as the one *The River* could’ve done without – makes more sense in context.

Springsteen’s concept was almost meta. While *The River*’s more sober-minded songs gave you the characters and their stories in all their fullness, he intended for listeners to imagine the wilder ones as the music those same characters wanted to hear when they went out at night to escape their woes. Van Zandt traces a similar kind of narrative throughline between the lovestruck doo-wop serenade “I Wanna Marry You” and “The River”. “It could’ve been the same couple 10 years later,” he says. “You had that whole life span of a relationship happening within one record.”

There were no shortage of newly minted Springsteen fans ready to imagine their own connections. *The River* sold more than 1.5 million copies in its first two months. The excitement felt by the band and audience alike is palpable in the footage of the concert in Tempe, Arizona, on November 9, shot on four cameras for promotional purposes and finally buffed up into a concert film in *The Ties That Bind* box. “That caught the band at what may be the height of its powers,” says Bittan. Tallent, who remembers still having to hitchhike between shows while *Born To Run* was high in the charts, sees *The River* as the beginning of the band’s real success. “‘Hungry Heart’ made a huge difference,” he says. “All of a sudden, we would see women in the audience instead of all men.”

The newfound financial security also freed Springsteen up to become more engaged with the world around him. “We were having major problems struggling to stay alive until ‘Hungry Heart’ hit,” says Van Zandt. “And bam, we sold five million albums and sell out arenas for the first time. Up until then you’re kinda making a living, but not really. You stay focused on the basic survival thing. Then you start feeling secure enough to look around and look at the world a little bit and you can’t help but start getting involved with politics.”

Onstage at Tempe in November, 1980, there was a first flicker of that new sensibility when Springsteen described the presidential election win for Ronald Reagan the night before as “pretty frightening”. The final leg of *The River* tour in 1981 included a benefit concert for Vietnam Veterans Of America – he wrote “Born In The USA” the same year. (Though the new tour coincides with the start of the 2016 presidential primary season, he keeps his political opinions to himself this time around, limiting his onstage endorsements to the local food banks

fundraising at the shows. Fans make do with their own Trump jokes.)

As Springsteen made his way through the new decade, he did so with a newfound confidence about his place in the broader community he sought. Not that there was a reduction in the amount of heavy lifting his art demanded. As Weinberg quips, “Rome wasn’t built in a day and *The River* wasn’t made in a week-and-a-half. The interesting thing is that what became the *Born In The USA* album, eight of the 12 tracks were recorded in, like, four days. Then he spent the next year-and-a-half writing another 70 songs to get four more songs.”

Clearmountain was similarly awed by that work ethic. “He was always writing,” he says. “A few years later when he was doing *Human Touch*, I remember being in the A&M Studios in LA mixing and we’d

take a lunch break. We’d be eating in the lounge area and he’d get halfway through a sandwich and then pick up his guitar and his notebook and start writing. He couldn’t even stop to eat lunch.”

SPRINGSTEEN DEVOTEES ARE waxing about the albums that never quite happened, the ones that can be glimpsed in box sets and bootlegs and the ones that still lurk on the tapes still in the vault. An excavation of the *Nebraska*/*Born In The USA* era feels inevitable, though a new Springsteen solo album is reportedly the next in the release queue. Even more so than *The Promise*, *The Ties That Bind* confirms how necessary process was for him to get where he wanted to go, to creating something that felt real to him and to everyone who heard it. As Bittan says, “There’s this essence of truth and life in all of those songs.”

Springsteen’s conversation with the past has inevitably prompted his fans to consider their own journeys. The woman sitting next to me in Washington describes the towering importance of Springsteen’s music for her husband. He’s a proud 50-timer who lets her do the talking – turns out he escaped an Ohio steel town by signing on with the Coast Guard while still a teen. “It was his only way out,” she says. They played “All That Heaven Will Allow” for the first dance at their wedding.

Time is on everyone’s mind when the evening’s rendition of *The River* wraps up with “Wreck On The Highway” – the haunting closing track about a man who’s moved to hold his young wife tighter after witnessing a grisly car accident and imagining the pain it brings to someone else’s home. Springsteen calls it “a recognition of mortality” and it’s a tough one to acknowledge. That may be why the E Street Band whoops it up so hard for the remainder of the show. If anything, the rollicking, house-lights-on finale of “Rosalita” and a cover of the Isley Brothers’ “Shout” feel a little desperate, as if any troubling thoughts needed to be banished from the room. But as Springsteen says onstage at Newark, “Once you enter that adult world, the clock starts ticking and you’ve got a limited amount of time to do your work, to raise your family, to try and do something good.” So maybe *The River*’s most valuable as a reminder of how precious those moments can be, whether it does so with a sad lament for this land’s walking wounded or with a heroic effort to make the good times last as long as they can. ☺

The Ties That Bind: The River Collection is available now through Sony

“THAT WAS A BIG OVERSIGHT...”

Inside *The Ties That Bind*: five keepers from the latest batch of outtakes

“MEET ME IN THE CITY”:

Recently performed with all due gusto on *Saturday Night Live*, this strident rocker quite possibly lost out to “Out In The Street” as *The River*’s requisite anthem in the night-belongs-to-us mode. Pretty glorious in any case.

“ROULETTE”:

“That was the big oversight,” says Springsteen of the mystifying decision to leave off the first song recorded for *The River* in March, 1979. Kicked off by Max Weinberg’s explosive intro, the performance matches the intensity of the lyrics’ taut reportage, inspired by the then-fresh accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor.

“WHERE THE BANDS ARE”:

Here’s another rabble rouser that would’ve attained singalong status had it made onto his set lists with any regularity. To be fair, it was a favourite on the 1999 tour after appearing on *Tracks*.

“WHITE LIGHTNING”:

With its eerie keyboard line, Duane Eddy licks and Big Man vamping in the final moments, this is a canny condensation of nearly everything the E Street Band loves about ‘50s rock and R’n’B.

“HELD UP WITHOUT A GUN”:

At 77 seconds, it could be very well be the shortest song in the entire Springsteen canon – it’s certainly one of the punkiest. This exhilarating blast of noise and fury briefly re-models Springsteen as the missing link between Eddie Cochran and Rocket From The Crypt.



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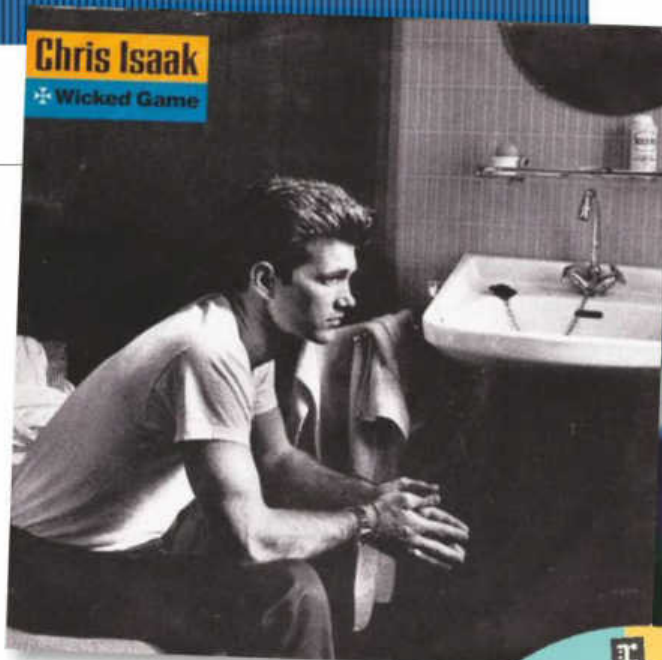
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Chris Isaak
Wicked Game

Wicked Game



BY CHRIS ISAAK

“It’s not a hit song” – how a melancholy ballad proved record-company wisdom wrong, aided by a famously raunchy video

“SOME BANDS HAVE songs they’re known for that don’t represent them,” says Chris Isaak. “But ‘Wicked Game’ is kind of indicative of what I like to do. I like to sing pretty ballads, I like moody surf

guitar, I like darkness, but I still try to put a melody or something pretty in there.”

A surprisingly subtle, dreamy and dark composition for a global hit, this gothic ballad was ignored on release in 1989, but its inclusion in David Lynch’s *Wild At Heart* the following year, and the somewhat steamy second video starring the singer with model Helena Christensen, turned the 34-year-old Californian into an international sensation.

Though the song has a sparse, atmospheric production, the creation of “Wicked Game” took months in the studio, and involved numerous edits, samplers, synths and daily liverwurst sandwiches.

“When Chris has an idea of how a tune should go,” explains Isaak’s long-time engineer Mark Needham, “he will go to the end of the world to find a solution. He’s not afraid to really dig in hard and work out what can get the lyrical content across. Sometimes that’s easy and sometimes it takes a really long time.”

Despite his successes in the studio, on stage and on screen – notably in Lynch’s *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* and his own sitcom in the early

2000s – Isaak wryly confides to *Uncut* that he’s just waiting to be rumbled as a romantic authority. “It’s pretty funny to have these love songs written by a guy who’s never been married, doesn’t have any kids and who has never even lived with anybody,” he laughs. “Maybe at some point people will go, ‘What do you know about love?’”

TOM PINNOCK

CHRIS ISAAK: My first two albums [1985’s *Silvertone* and 1986’s *Chris Isaak*] sold just enough for me not to be dropped. We had enough success with the first record to get to make the second one.

MARK NEEDHAM: It was a different time back then – you could spend a year making a record.

ISAAK: We weren’t selling millions of records, so nobody was really on our case. The most common thing the label said was, “We don’t hear a single.” They said that about “Wicked Game” and [1995 hit] “Baby Did A Bad, Bad Thing”.

NEEDHAM: “Wicked Game” was a painful birth, but a beautiful baby.

ISAAK: A lot of songs I write could take five years, but “Wicked Game” was one that I wrote

KEY PLAYERS



CHRIS ISAAK
Vocals, guitar,
songwriting



ROWLAND SALLEY
Bass



FRANK MARTIN
Keyboards



MARK NEEDHAM
Engineer

probably in 20 minutes, the whole thing. I wrote it because there was a very alluring, really sensuous woman in my life at the time, who was bad news, she was always two steps away from being prosecuted or getting in trouble. She called me and said, “I wanna come over.” And I thought, “Don’t see this girl, don’t get in trouble with this girl!” But I said, “Yeah.” So I hung up the phone and I went, “*The world was on fire and no-one could save me but you*,” and I had the song. By

the time she came in, I was in such a good mood because I’d written this song, and all I wanted to do was play guitar. I was like “Listen, listen!”

ROWLAND SALLEY: Lefty Frizzell had used a minor chord as the fifth instead of the more common major in “That’s The Way Love Goes”. That chord change had always caught my ear, and there it was again in “Wicked Game”. But the way Chris presented it the first time it seemed like the intro needed developing. In retrospect, it reminds me of the innocuous pawn that



Chris Isaak, 1991: "I liked the idea of a love song where it's very fatalistic at the end"

nobody notices at first, but which then wins the game in the end.

ISAAK: The last line, "*nobody loves no-one*"? Roy Orbison told me, "You know, Chris, you should always have a little bit of hope in every song." And in this one, I think I went in the other direction. But I liked the idea of a love song where it's very fatalistic at the end. The whole song is about surrendering to the inevitable, that you're gonna get crashed on the rocks but you go there anyway.

SALLEY: I remember recognising elements in it that had come from conversations we'd had about music, and other discussions that happen naturally among people who do a lot of travelling together.

FRANK MARTIN: Recording [*Isaak's third album*] *Heart Shaped World* took quite a while. We recorded in a small place called Dave Wellhausen Recording [*in San Francisco*]. I remember it well, a real little place.

ISAAK: It was a funky place that used to be an icehouse. You'd go out the front and they had a sandwich shop, and I remember the cheapest one was liverwurst, so I ate so many liverwurst sandwiches. They'd be like, "You must like liverwurst!" "Well, it's 15 cents less than anything else..."

SALLEY: The basic tracks were done fairly quickly and essentially became 'workshops' on which the rest of the sonic content of the song was constructed. I'm talking days for the basic tracking of a dozen songs, then months for everything else that went into them.

NEEDHAM: One of our main problems on "Wicked Game" was that we wanted a super-hypnotic feel, and cutting it live we just weren't getting that. So we ended up getting Kenney [Dale Johnson] to play all of his drum parts separately, sampling them, then putting them into an Akai DD1000 and programming them with his live parts right off the grid. Same with the bass.

ISAAK: I remember at one point taking the drums and laying the entire tape down on the floor, measuring distances to count beats.

SALLEY: What I tried to do on the bass was to keep it simple and wide open to allow the other as-yet-unforeseen instruments plenty of room to hop in any number of directions. The wonderful stuff that you hear on the final version was the product of a lot of sleuthing in the studio after the basic track was laid down.

MARTIN: For me, what sold that song in the first place was the haunting vocals and the haunting guitar. The combination of those was just over-the-top amazing.

NEEDHAM: Chris writes songs that are difficult to sing. We were doing it live in the control room, not through headphones. There's such a wide dynamic range on it that Chris was having an easier time keeping pitch on it that way. If you listen on the verses, whenever Chris sings you'll hear the ambience change, and the drums bleed back into the microphone – it was a cool effect!

ISAAK: You hope a performance comes naturally... you should be telling it like it's a dramatic reading, as well as hitting all the notes.

NEEDHAM: Recording the vocals was probably a two- or three-week process. We were doing guitars at the same time. Chris would come in and sing every evening for a few hours, and we'd try to figure out the approach. So it took a while. Of course, now Chris can sing it perfectly.

ISAAK: I remember my guitar player at the time [James Calvin Wilsey] didn't want to have a tremolo bar on his guitar. I said, "Why don't you put a tremolo bar on?", and he goes, "Why, so I can have it go out of tune?", and I said, "Some people play them and they don't go out of tune, we could try it" – because I wanted that sound, I was singing the lead part, but I wanted to hear it on guitar.

NEEDHAM: We used a regular-strung acoustic guitar and a high-strung acoustic guitar for

FACT FILE

• **Written by:** Chris Isaak
 • **Performers:** Chris Isaak (guitar, vocals), James Calvin Wilsey (guitar), Rowland Salley (bass), Kenney Dale Johnson (drums), Frank Martin (keyboards), Christine Wall and Cynthia Lloyd (backing vocals)
 • **Produced by:** Erik Jacobsen
 • **Recorded at:** Dave Wellhausen Recording, San Francisco
 • **Highest UK/US chart position:** UK 10; US 6

song.” I couldn’t raise 30,000 bucks on my own. So I just left it.

NEEDHAM: It seemed like a standout to us – it’s a beautiful song – but it is one of those ones where it was difficult to see it as a smash iconic hit, because it’s a ballad.

ISAAK: A disc jockey called Lee Chesnut heard it and thought it was

a great song, so he started playing it on his show and it went to No 1 in his area. Then another show heard it and they started playing it, and it went to No 1 in their area. It started spreading, and the record company went, “Oh, maybe this could be a hit – make a video, here’s some money.” But David Lynch was willing to make a video for it before the record company was willing to pay. Then the company said they wanted to make a bigger video, because his was connected to the movie, and MTV had rules that they wouldn’t play a movie video after the movie had been out a certain amount of time. MTV always had stupid rules – like if you had a girl on a bed with a guy, one of them had to have a foot on the floor.

NEEDHAM: David Lynch productions are obviously dark, and *Wild At Heart* was the perfect vehicle for one of Chris’ songs, because a lot of his work is pretty moody.

ISAAK: Working with David Lynch and getting “Wicked Game” into one of his projects was fantastic for us, I thought it was a good blend.



In the video with Helena Christensen

Quiff Isaak: publicity shot from 1989

• Chris’ rhythm part. Then the lead guitar is a Strat through a ’64 Fender Deluxe, nothing fancy. But then that’s going to a fader that was sending to a delay, and that’s coming back through an Eventide H3000 on a rich chorus that goes out to a big plate reverb, so there’s all these swells going on. With each note, you’ll hear it swell, and then spread out in stereo and off into delay and reverb.

ISAAK: I still have people come up to me and say, “We have bets on what the backing vocals are singing.” “*This world is only gonna break your heart*,” that’s what they’re singing. The girls who sang it were from a local band. One of them, Cynthia Lloyd, I always liked the quality of her voice. It didn’t sound like a background singer; it sounded like a real person.

MARTIN: When I came in, my job was to provide an environment. You have to really listen to hear my part, but if you took it away the song would be naked. I used an ethereal sound on a Roland S-50, something dark and warm, with a body to it, that you could slide in to fill in the gaps. I might have played Hammond organ as well, but it’s so back [in the mix]. My role was really to provide ambience, to add to the guitar ambience without ever getting in the way of it.

ISAAK: I never had meetings with the label – I just figured if they didn’t notice me, they’d forget I was there and I could stay on the label forever. But I went to them and I said, “I want to make a video for this song, I think it could be a hit.” They said, “Chris, it’s not a hit song, it’s not a rock

David’s really smart, he’s really nice, he’s good at everything. He can write, he can draw – he’s fun to work with. We don’t go golfing together or anything like that, but I love him. If he called me and said, “Chris, I’m building a doghouse,” I’d go, “I’ll bring nails!” I just like working with him, whatever he does.

SALLEY: I had heard “Wicked Game” many times without the vocal, so it didn’t surprise me when I heard it as an instrumental in *Wild At Heart*. Apparently some people were surprised that it was a lot more than just an instrumental.

ISAAK: In the second video we made, in Hawaii, people think that behind me is a green screen of clouds in fast motion, but it’s actual steam billowing up off the water. I was standing on a mantle of six inches of glass, and beneath my feet was flowing lava. When it hit the ocean it was boiling up. Every so often a softball-sized ball of molten lava went up in the air like 200ft, and everybody would go “Watch out!” It’s amazing when people say to me, “I won’t let my kids watch it, because I know you’re really doing it.” What do you mean, you really think we’re having sex? I go, “No, she’s an actress, she’s pretending to like me for the video.” They gave me a big fancy hotel suite for the shoot, and they had another funky room at another place for Helena – it smelt like an old book. So I said, “Give her this nice room, I’ll have the crummy one. She’s going to have make-up to do, I don’t have much to do.” At three or four o’clock in the morning my girlfriend at the time calls, and of course Helena Christensen answers. When I heard the story I thought, “This is funny, I’ll be able to explain: ‘Honey, I switched rooms,’” but she never believed it. She was like, “No, you were in there with Helena Christensen.” And I was like, “I wish! In my dreams.”

MARTIN: When we were recording the song, I didn’t realise how powerful it was. It wasn’t until I heard the song mixed that I went, “Good lord, what an incredible song and production.” Each song to me on *Heart Shaped World* is like a chapter in a book.

ISAAK: It’s funny, in the movies everything is really over the top and dramatic. You know if a band in a movie has a hit, they play it in the movie and everybody stops what they’re doing and dances. That doesn’t really happen in real life, but with “Wicked Game”, even before it was a hit, before it was on radio, people would stop and go, “Oh, what’s that, I like that!”

MARTIN: It’s one of those songs where every element just came together. Chris’ life changed as far as audiences and venues, but he stayed the same. That’s the beautiful thing about Chris, he always loved to live by the beach and go surfing and hang out. A very supportive guy, and a consummate pro, too.

ISAAK: People do like to hear “Wicked Game” live still, it’s one of the songs they come to hear usually. We always try to play it, and I always enjoy it. People ask, “Do you get sick of playing it?”, and I go, “Are you kidding me? I wish I had 15 more like that! If I had 15 more like that, I’d be Paul McCartney.”

Chris Isaak’s *First Comes The Night* is out now

TIMELINE

January 1985: Isaak releases his debut album, *Silvertone*, named after his backing group of Rowland

Salley, Kenney Dale Johnson and James Calvin Wilsey
June 1989: His third album, *Heart Shaped*

World, is released, with “Don’t Make Me Dream About You” chosen as the first single
Summer 1990: David

Lynch’s *Wild At Heart* is released, featuring an instrumental “Wicked Game” during a scene on a deserted highway

January 1991: Now an international star, Isaak releases *Wicked Game*, a compilation of songs from his first three LPs

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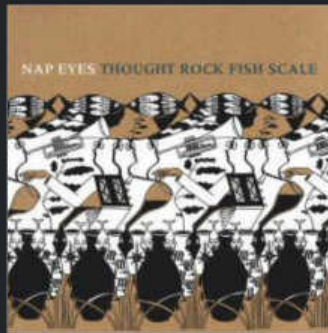
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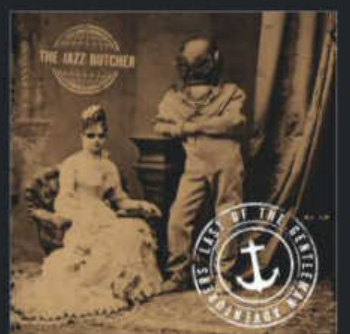
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JEANS GENIUS!

Welcome back the new, improved WHITE DENIM, supercharged and adventurous riff-manglers from the Lone Star State. In Austin's premier barbecue joint, *Uncut* reconnects with James Petralli and his reconfigured band to discuss jams, splits, Leon Bridges, vintage Rickenbackers and the hefty references they carry so lightly: The Dead! Miles! The Beatles! Beefheart! And much, much more...

Story: Andy Gill

Photo: Drew Anthony Smith

IN THEIR FUNKY little studio/rehearsal space in a commercial district in the north-west of Austin, White Denim are running through tracks from their forthcoming album, *Stiff*. The air bristles with spidery guitar licks and bulges with muscular polyrhythms as they hammer the new material into roadworthy shape.

Every band wants a clubhouse of some sort, whether it's The Band down in the basement of Big Pink, Traffic jamming on the back porch of their Berkshire cottage, or Kraftwerk winding down at Kling Klang after a few hours in the saddle. Somewhere they can relax, kick back, and mould half-formed ideas into musical gems. White Denim's current clubhouse is typical in many respects. There are the shelves of old

keyboards, and the dozens of guitars, banjos and electric sitars hanging on the walls; the beat-up old leather sofa; two enormous speakers the size of wardrobes; and lots of ancient analogue recording equipment with massive bakelite knobs. "A lot of this stuff, like those old broadcast consoles, was found by our tube guru Jim Vollentine," says singer James Petralli. "The primary console in here was built for the Munich Olympics – it's a weird British/German frankenstein thing, with both EMI components and Telefunken components, a unique one-of-a-kind console."

The plethora of old gear speaks of an obsessive attention to sonic detail; but this band is essentially about guys playing together, enmeshed with each others' parts, as becomes evident during the rehearsal. Sometimes, the four

musicians seem to be pursuing their own individual agendas, which somehow magically braid into one taut cable of propulsive riffing, in the manner of the Grateful Dead or the Allman Brothers Band. It's an extraordinary thing to witness, this high-wire act of musical juggling, and it's one of the things that makes White Denim such a thrilling live band.

But there's a constant flow of new ideas and different options being tried, accepted or discarded. For the jazzy album closer "Thank You", they experiment with a section that swings like Miles' "All Blues", before slipping into a passage of tricky metrical guitar interplay. Clearly, some songs are still in a state of flux, despite having already been recorded. This, it transpires, was the result of their first time recording with a big-name producer, Ethan



White Denim in November, 2015: (l-r) Jeff Olson, James Petralli, Steve Terebecki, Jonathan Horne

Johns, widely admired for his work with Laura Marling and Kings Of Leon, and for revitalising Tom Jones' recording career with his recent trilogy of roots albums.

"We've never been in with a producer, fully," says Petralli, "so we didn't rehearse the band super-hard. We thought, this guy's gonna come in and be like a bandleader type of producer – just knowing the records he's done, I know he's had that role in a few of them – so I figured, we'll not overwork this too much. So we get in and say, 'This is kind of what we were thinking,' and give him tons of first impressions, and he'd say, 'You're done – no more vocals, no more guitars. That's it.' So in a way, we're still learning and writing the songs now. We've done the record, and that's cool, but now we're like, 'What do we want to do with these songs?'"

PREVIOUSLY, THE BAND'S clubhouse had been drummer Josh Block's trailer, where they recorded their 2008 debut, *Workout Holiday*, its follow-up, *Fits*, and 2010's free download album, *Last Day Of Summer*, before shifting operations to a studio overlooking Lake Travis, 25 miles west of Austin. With second guitarist Austin Jenkins added to the line-up, the sound on 2011's *D* and 2014's *Corsicana Lemonade* broadened from the original trio's jazz-influenced garage-rock power-jamming blitz to take in more mellow moods and modes. All manner of Americana flavours crept into their style, from the falsetto soul of Curtis Mayfield to the country funk of Little Feat. It seemed there was no limit to the places they could go, musically.

Then everything changed, largely as a result of Josh Block and Austin Jenkins having chosen to

move back to the Dallas/Fort Worth area, where Josh had grown up. Though no great distance by American standards, 200 miles is one heck of a commute, and the two halves of White Denim slowly ripped apart. Josh and Austin were keen to set up a studio in Dallas and start recording local talent; and right off the bat, they struck lucky when Austin discovered a young gospel/soul singer, Leon Bridges. Having recorded an album, *Coming Home*, with Bridges, they were surprised when it took off, climbing the charts in the UK and the US. Suddenly, Block and Jenkins faced new responsibilities, and became the young singer's backing band as he set about meeting the sudden huge demand for live shows. Initially, it coincided with a break in White Denim's schedule; but as *Coming Home* became more popular, a conflict of divided loyalties arose. ●

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF WHITE DENIM

A SEVER WITH White Denim, *Stiff* balances fiery energy and furrow-browed complexity with a winning light-heartedness, reflected in the sleeve design. Although it's their first cover not created by Petralli's old college chum Michael Hammond, the design devised by San Francisco artist Eugenia Loli continues the collage aesthetic of previous albums, with an absurdist, chucklesome image of spiky cacti stuffed into the waistband of a bikini bottom. And there's a smirking silliness about the song titles, with five of the nine tracks boasting brackets – most stupidly with “Ha Ha Ha Ha (Yeah)”, which suits a song as infectious as it is dumb.



“I really just wanted to drive home the humour aspect,” admits Petralli. “There’s no other reason. We enjoyed deciding what words to use in the brackets, and where to put them – in the middle of the title, maybe? We’re always bad about naming our songs, too. Half the tunes in our catalogue have titles, but we don’t call them that; we still refer to them by the working titles. And the working title will change as we’re working on it, so half of the band will think it’s this rather than that, and there are moments in rehearsal where we’ll count off and half the band is playing a different song. We’re not on the same page with working titles. So I was just kind of speaking to that.

“And it looks really funny, too. I get a kick out of imagining it on satellite radio, and as it’s playing, this funny title scrolling across the digital screen.”



White Denim in their Dallas studio, January 2016

“We went on a break for a couple of months, and the next thing we knew,” says Petralli, “we got in touch and said, ‘Hey, are we gonna get together and do some demos?’”

“...but they were on tour for 18 months,” says bassist Steve Terebecki.

“They went out and did the whole thing with Leon,” explains Petralli. “And we thought, we have to work, we’ve got children to feed!”

“We just had to get back to work,” says Terebecki. “We had no idea how long they were gonna be.”

“I don’t think there was any specific point when Austin and I left White Denim,” says Josh Block. “There wasn’t a point of saying that anything was over; it was more to do with the way things started coming together. It was more of a life decision than a musical one. It’s hard to describe: things kinda sneak up behind you and shake you a bit, so you make a call for a period of time.

“But I wouldn’t have made a decision like that if I thought they’d be hurt by it: the last thing I’d ever want to do to my friends would be to leave them high and dry. And Jeff, the new drummer they’ve got, is just fantastic.”

He certainly is. Both new drummer Jeff Olson and new guitarist Jonathan Horne display the kind of dizzying, jazz-seasoned chops that you’d expect of White Denim players. And for Olson, who studied jazz at the local University Of Texas, it’s a dream gig. “I guess I was 13 when *Fits* came out, and that and *D* were two huge albums for me when I grew up,” he says. “I was a huge White Denim fan! So when James asked me if I could drum on the Bop English tour it was like, holy shit, this person that I idolise is asking me to play with them! Josh was one of my favourite drummers, growing up. In any other band, I would try to play like him; but now it’s my job to play like him, I guess. When we play the old tunes, I try to be as faithful to his parts as possible.”

Bop English was the alter-ego for James Petralli’s solo

studio side-project. “It was like a vacation record,” he says. “If guys had the time, they would come in and play. And when I decided to release it, the labels wanted me to tour it, so I had to get a band together. Jeff, we met at a White Denim gig, and Jonathan we’ve known for a long time, he’s good buddies with Steve. It was just going to be a temporary thing, but we had such a good rapport that we just kind of moved them into this project.”

Softly spoken, bewhiskered guitarist Jonathan Horne moved to Austin around the same time as Petralli and Terebecki, and met them in the local band scene.

“I still have a band called Plutonium Farmers, that Steve and James would come and see,” says Horne. “Sometimes they’d be the only folks in the audience! I had known Steve for ages – for at least three years, I would run into him on his birthday, and end up at his birthday party. It’s meant to be!

“Steve and I had similar musical tastes, but we started talking about playing music together when we discovered we had mutual friends in the Chicago jazz scene, like Frank Rosaly and Ingebrigt Håker Flaten – I used to be in a group with them, called The Young Mothers. But I’ve always wanted to play with White Denim, and I guess it got rolling when I was asked to play on the Bop English record, then the tour.”

The new recruits fit snugly into the White Denim style, Olson anchoring things with a reliable but infinitely pliable sense of when to drive and when to swing, while Horne trades licks with Petralli, making minute adjustments in emphasis as required, switching smoothly between vamps and lead figures, his jazz chops expanding the band’s musical grammar in a way perhaps comparable to Nels Cline’s input into Wilco. At one point, Petralli compliments Horne on his use of finger-vibrato, characterising it as “the 1950s way” of getting a tremelo effect. “You know, Rickenbacker actually put them on guitars back in the 1940s,” says



Bridges: "Such a sweet guy!"

COMING HOME WITH LEON

Josh Block on his successful collaboration with the young gospel/soul singer

"L EON BRIDGES IS a local kid that we met at this bar, the Magnolia Motor Lounge in downtown Fort Worth," says Josh Block. "He picked up a guitar in between somebody's set and played a bit, and his songs were fantastic. We got really involved with him. He's such a sweet guy, we just didn't want to send him out there all alone! So we stuck around and he ended up being really successful."

Block and Austin Jenkins had been looking to set up a studio, using the recording equipment that Josh had acquired over the years, and Bridges became their first client. "People had wanted to make records with Leon before, but I don't think they really appealed to him," says Block. "He was also not rich, so he didn't have \$400 a day for a studio! So the stars aligned, and we produced the kind of record he wanted to make."

"Leon's obsessed with specific-sounding records, especially that generation of Southern soul singers from the early '60s. And sonically, we kind of have a love affair with that stuff, too. We got all the musicians together in one room, and just tried to tape actual performances, the same way that a lot of the stuff he was really into was done."

The result was *Coming Home*, a retro-soul album which allows Bridges' vocal affinities to Sam Cooke and Marv Johnson to shine through in arrangements that hark back to both Memphis and New Orleans.

Coming Home was an immediate success, and as it climbed into the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic, Block and Jenkins found themselves out on the road as Bridges' backing band - the latter still serves as his musical director - for months, before the birth of a new baby forced Block to return to Dallas, where he resumed work at the new studio. "Working with Leon ignited a passion that I didn't really think I'd have," says Block. "I didn't think I'd be one of those people that would move back home and want to re-invest in the area I grew up in; but man, I get such satisfaction out of working with local young people from the area I came from. There's all kinds of people who're in a place I was 10 years ago and I just want to help them any way I can."

Horne, with the helpfully informative tone of the tech nerd. "Oh, I knew you would know the exact date!" chuckles Petralli, as they set up for the next run-through.

THE FOLLOWING DAY, I'm in Antone's Record Shop, re-purchasing my past on vinyl, when I get a call from James, suggesting we meet up for lunch at Steve's favourite barbecue joint, Ruby's BBQ. By chance, it's just around the corner. I follow my nose, and a short while later we're slaving over bulging trays of ribs and brisket, while Terebecki bounces his one-year-old daughter, Cookie, on his knee and tries to construct a pulled-brisket sandwich.

Despite the tribulations of the past year, they both seem remarkably at ease, exuding the confidence of musicians who suspect they've probably just made their best album so far, one that reins in the stylistic diversity of the last couple of albums to something closer to the whirlwind math-rock riffing of *Fits*, in particular. It's no accident, for instance, that one track title, "Mirrored In Reverse", echoes "Mirrored And Reversed" from that album; nor that the album title should effectively be *Fits* in reverse.

"Yeah, we almost just had one 'F'," Terebecki admits. "We were this close..."

"We spent some time talking about what we should do," says Petralli. "We thought, as a band, what's our favourite thing that we've done? We always talk about our first couple of records in this way, looking at what it was that made us happy about our group, that made us feel like a band. It was just doing what feels good, basically, and the most natural thing for us is just rocking, I guess!"

"But recorded in a different way," says Terebecki. "The first one wasn't anywhere near as hi-fi as this one."

"The process was such fun in those days," says Petralli, wistfully. "We had very little pressure, we were just making records for fun. When we made *D*, it was our first time in front of hi-fi recording gear, and I feel it created this reaction in the group, that we should make records in this certain

"The most natural thing for us is just rocking"

JAMES PETRALLI



Lunch on the run: James Petralli during the making of his Bop English album, 2015



Boxcar kids: White Denim in April 2011—(l-r) Terebecki, Petralli, Jenkins and Block

way. Like, personally, I didn't know how to sing into a U47 mic at all, and hearing myself that clearly, I thought, 'Whoah, I have to change the way I'm doing it to fit,' which is not something you should be thinking about, making a rock record."

"It's the same with all the instruments," adds Terebecki. "There's so much more clarity with everything. It changed how we played, for sure."

"That led us to the mindset that, 'We can do these things, so maybe we should do them,'" says Petralli. "I'm proud of those records, but I can hear myself thinking in a way that's different from the raw energy of the first couple of records. I think we just wanted to feel like that again."

For all its streamlined sound and methods, *Stiff* is stuffed with the kind of musical references that make it a joy for sonic encyclopaedists, like the Red Krayola quote that opens the album, and the Beatles flavour percolating through "There's A Brain In My Head".

"Yeah, for sure," admits Petralli. "Our records are always kinda tucked with little nuggets, for people that listen to a lot of records – even down to the guitar sound of that track. (For which, Terebecki reveals, their working title was "Taxman")."

"We're all pretty nerdy when it comes to things like gear and recording techniques," Petralli adds, "and working with Ethan amplified that. We'd be wanting to do the guitar direct, like The Beatles did with 'Taxman', and he'd turn it into a mono mix, or super-early stereo, so the drums are just in the left channel. There were a few moments when we'd struggle with tempos from section to section, and he'd look at us really seriously, push his glasses down like this, 'I will make a record, whether or not you guys want to right now.' He's really good, though, and really cool."

The album was done, as Petralli puts it, the way a pre-1973 record would be made, before 24-track was introduced.

"We recorded live to 16-track tape, on a console that used to be at A&M when Ethan started working there in the '80s, on which he learned how to be a producer. That exact same console ended up in Echo Mountain Studio in North Carolina. They also had eight of the channels his dad Glyn Johns had put in Ronnie Lane's mobile studio, stuff that he had used for *Who's Next* and *Faces* stuff. There was a lot of Johns family history at that studio up in North Carolina."

With Johns egging them on, the band ended up with an album with one eye bravely on the future and the other gazing fondly to the past, typically triggering echoes from all corners of rock's rich tapestry. Perhaps the most overstuffed example of White Denim's penchant for sprinkling music-history nuggets among their songs is "(I'm The One) Big Big Fun", whose hook "Diddy-wah-diddy, da-doo-ron-ron" is built from an odd alliance of Spector and Beefheart catchphrases. Somehow it works, partly because they're both meaningless phrases.

"Yes, and 'Big Fun' itself is a Miles Davis reference, too," adds Petralli. "I suppose there are so many references in that song: *I'm the one, I'm the one* is like 'Seventh Son' from the first Sly record, before he had The Family Stone. And for the live version of it, we're going to stick these triplets in there referencing 'Viola Lee Blues', the last song on the first Dead record – they do this cool, washy triplet feel, it's really confusing, but then a snare-drum kicks it back into the thing. We'll see how many Deadheads call us on that!"

White Denim release *Stiff* on March 25 via Downtown/Sony Red



WHITE DENIM BUYER'S GUIDE



8/10 FULL TIME

HOBBY, 2007

The dazzling debut throws down a garage-rock gauntlet of furious energy and ebullient invention, and establishes their characteristic pick'n'mix approach to rock history – including echoes of Love, the Velvet, Devo and Beefheart, for starters.



10/10 FULL TIME

HOBBY, 2009

The quintessential WD: a storm of polyrhythmic, punk-infused power-trio workouts fizzing with nervous energy and bristling with echoes of Hendrix, Zappa, Doors, Beach Boys, Bacharach and Meat Puppets. Just amazing.



8/10

DOWNTOWN, 2010

The final blast from Josh Block's trailer studio, equal parts lysergic country-rock, West Coast pop and surprisingly delicate jazz instrumentals. Niiice! And free to download.



9/10

2011

This is like a cross between the Grateful Dead and the Magic Band: spiky trickster rhythms, sleek country-rock harmonies and a side order of cool Afro-Cuban jazz flute.



9/10

DOWNTOWN, 2013

The "barbecue record", exploring mellower modes rooted in the Southern country-boogie of such as Little Feat, Barefoot Jerry, the Allman Brothers and Steve Miller. 1972 backporch vibes brought up to date.



8/10

BLOOD AND BISCUITS, 2015

James Petralli's alter-ego makes his entrance, with yet another eclectic ransacking of music influences, in which fun ideas spiral off at tangents from stupidly infectious songs.



9/10

COLUMBIA, 2015

The young Texan retro-soulman fell among friends when he hooked up with WD's Josh Block and Austin Jenkins, who outfitted him with Southern soul settings as snugly stylish and period-specific as the high-waisted strides he wears on the cover.



9/10

2016

A return to the fiery cauldron of *Fits* for the new-look WD, stuffed with sprung-steel riffs, quicksilver solos and scudding swamp boogie. Plus a couple of cool R&B interludes from James Petralli's inner soul man.

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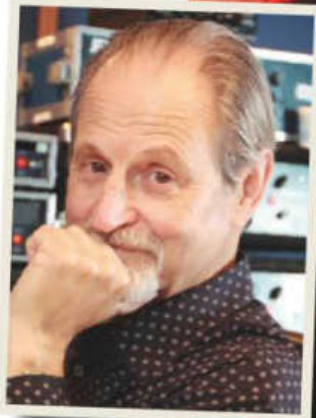
ALBUM BY ALBUM

Eddie Kramer

The prolific producer reflects on his steep learning curve

IF YOU WANT to analyse great bands," says Kramer, recalling his work with the likes of The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and Traffic, "you always come to the conclusion that they have these wonderful elements that are often polar opposites. And yet somehow it works."

As an engineer and producer, he has spent 55 years marshalling these elements into some of the finest LPs in rock history, from *Young Americans* and *Beggars Banquet* to the Woodstock soundtrack, and even Derek & Clive's '76 debut. "I was underneath the board," recalls Kramer of the latter, "crying with laughter, 'cos it was just so bloody funny!" His work with Jimi Hendrix on all three of his original studio albums remains his crowning glory, though. "I always had the tape running," he explains. "Because something would happen in a second and you'd go, 'Shit! I should have had that!'" **TOM PINNOCK**



Kramer on Hendrix: "We understood each other"

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

TRACK, 1967



Kramer heads to Olympic Studios with the Experience and Chas Chandler to speedily record the guitarist's debut

I first met Jimi around January 1967 at Olympic in

London. There were a couple of tracks he had done at De Lane Lea, but they weren't completed so we finished what he'd done before and then cut the rest of the LP. Why Olympic? My impression was that Jimi was thrilled with the sounds I was getting there, thank God! Working with an artist of that stature, you're always trying to be one step ahead and trying to interpret what they're hearing in their heads. That has always been my challenge and job in life. I think having achieved that level of confidence and success with him, in the sense that he understood me and I understood him, and he loved what I did, we hit it off immediately. Chas was very happy there, too. He said an amazing thing to us in his lovely Newcastle accent: "The rules are, there are no rules." It opened up the floodgates for us in terms of experimentation. We all felt this was a wonderful thing we'd all fallen into, this amazing music that Jimi had created. It was always a challenge and always funny. When I look back on those days, I think, 'Oh God, I was so lucky, I was in the right place at the right time.' Some of the techniques I used were from working with a fantastic engineer at Pye in '63, Bob Auger. We went out to record symphony orchestras with three mics, and some of that stuck in my brain and evolved into the distance-mic'ing technique in the rock'n'roll world. It worked very well.

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE AXIS: BOLD AS LOVE

TRACK, 1967



More experimentation ensued on Hendrix's second album, with copious effects and bouncing for Kramer to master

I've always thought of Hendrix's first album as

being fairly primitive – it's definitely got a lot of hair on it. Certainly by the second album we wanted to expand our technological expertise. "Well, what do we do now with Jimi? Let's go more stereo..." "Yeah man, let's do that!" So obviously the drums were done in stereo and I would start expanding more on the type of stereo right from the beginning, and plan it more with the sounds that Jimi was creating. Then I heard things in my head and I was thinking, "Jeez, maybe I could do this..." I didn't revolutionise engineering. I was part of the whole English recording movement that had to adapt, because we didn't have eight-track like the Americans did and we were very jealous of what they were doing. The Beatles, fortunately, had some very brilliant engineers who managed to synch up two four-track machines, but we didn't quite have that, so we improvised. The way we did it was the bounce: we would take a stereo mix of the four tracks that we had recorded and record them on another machine in stereo and then fill up those two tracks. Then you have another four-track master and take that and mix that in stereo back to the first machine. The bottom line here is that you had to be really right on with your mixing, because if you made one mistake you would have to go all the way back to the beginning, which was a pain in the arse.

TRAFFIC TRAFFIC

ISLAND/UNITED ARTISTS, 1968



Steve Winwood and co's expansive second album, recorded by Kramer and producer Jimmy Miller

Of course, Steve Winwood was a genius, he had a fabulous voice and was a great musician. All those

accolades absolutely apply; however, if it were not for Jimmy Miller, *Traffic* would never have sounded like it finally did, nor would it have been as exciting as it was, because Jimmy added so much... in terms of his production techniques, his ability to get into the heart and soul of the band and how they wrote and how they created. He was, I think, the greatest producer of that era. Traffic were very fortunate, they had this country place [Aston Tirrold, Berkshire], where they'd do a lot of pre-production and work on the material, so by the time they came into the studio, it was pretty well sorted out. Musicians in those days didn't bugger around too much, except if you were the Stones, who'd use the studio as a rehearsal space and then record. But Traffic were pretty damn tight; it was just a question of Jimmy Miller pulling an amazing performance out of their arses, which he did every night. In "Dear Mr Fantasy" – the double-time section at the end – we've got the whole thing down and it's sounding cool. But all of a sudden, Jimmy disappears and then jumps up on the stage in the studio, grabs a pair of maracas and when the double-time comes in, he's just kicking it. The band look up, startled to see Jimmy there, and just get into this very exciting jam. He realised it needed a big kick in the butt and that's what he did. Jimmy was a drummer, an entertainer – he grew up in Las



The Rolling Stones in 1968: "They wouldn't show up 'til midnight, if you were lucky!"

Vegas – a comedian, a great musician. He just had an innate instinct, and that's what a great producer does. I wanted to model myself after him when I eventually became a producer three years later.

THE ROLLING STONES BEGGARS BANQUET

DECCA, 1968



Kramer and Miller team up again for the Stones' back-to-basics classic

The best records the Stones ever made were with Jimmy Miller. *Beggars Banquet* was going back to

their roots, which is what Jimmy was so good at doing. He understood where they got their blues influence from and he wanted to extract that raw, basic, rocking Stones – and boy, did he do that! I started with the Stones in 1967 as an assistant engineer working on *Between The Buttons*, the *Flowers* album, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. I managed to play percussion, I think, on there. While we were making *Beggars Banquet*, we'd book a session for 7pm and most of them wouldn't show up 'til midnight if you were lucky. And then they'd go 'til 5 or 6am, and then there'd be another session coming in the studio at eight or nine and so they'd all have to bugger off! They'd usually get a track done in that time. Even if Brian Jones showed up, he'd probably do a solo and collapse, the poor bloke. He was a genius, though. The beginning of "Street Fighting Man"? My recollection is that Jimmy Miller brought in a Wollensak – a cassette machine with one mic built in – stuck it on the floor, pressed 'Record' and the band just made a circle around it. And that was the basic track. Now, of course, Keith says it was his idea and his tape machine, but I don't quite remember it that way.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE ELECTRIC LADYLAND

TRACK, 1968

Relocated to New York City, Hendrix and Kramer construct the guitarist's masterpiece

I left England to go to America to continue working with Jimi in 1968. And all of sudden I'm jumping from four-track to 12-track and – holy crap! It was amazing! Jimi's concept for *Electric Ladyland* was to try to involve friends and musicians who he trusted. But he had a unique way of testing it out in advance. Jimi would book the session for a seven or eight o'clock start, and he wouldn't show up 'til midnight, but he had a plan. New York City is on a grid, so imagine you're going up 8th Avenue

to 44th Street. Eighth was where the Record Plant was, and two blocks away north up on 46th Street was a club called The Scene. Jimi would be there at nine o'clock and jam until midnight, sussing out who the cool musicians were. On one particular night we had everything set up ready for him. He was up at The Scene jamming, and fortunately Steve Winwood showed up, with [Jefferson Airplane's] Jack Casady on bass and a few other stragglers, and Jimi says, "Oi! You come with me, just follow me down to the studio." You can imagine the line of people walking down 8th Avenue – Jimi leading the pack with his hat and his feather and his guitar and everything, walking into the Record Plant. And we were ready to go within literally five or ten minutes of checking the sounds: one rehearsal, one take, dang! There it is! "Voodoo Chile"! That is how rock'n'roll should be recorded. None of this bollocks, you know, one track at a time in your basement, and using samples – fuck all that. It's nonsense. Obviously, there are times when you have a song – like "1983... (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)" – that needs that type of attention to detail when you're layering it, but with Jimi there was always a plan. He always had something figured out, and he always carried with him a big yellow legal pad, and would write down the structure of the song; what went where, who played what. So he had it in his head, he knew exactly what he wanted to do – it was just a question of me trying to be on top of it and interpreting what he wanted and just going with the flow.

EDDIE KRAMER

LED ZEPPELIN

II ATLANTIC, 1969



Recorded on the road, Kramer engineers the Zep's pioneering second

My relationship with Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones goes back to Olympic in '67 where they were session musicians,

and I recorded them. Certainly John Paul Jones and I were good friends. I remember he called me when he'd just finished the first record and he said, "Come over to the flat and listen to this." So I went over and I listened and I went, "Bloody hell! What's that?" "It's the new band, Led Zeppelin." I said, "Christ almighty! That's a stupid fucking name! Why would you want to call a band that?" Boy, was I ever wrong. Anyway, it was genius when I heard it. Then they came over to the States in '69, I got a call from their office asking if I could help finish the recording for *Led Zeppelin II*. We cut some more tracks, I overdubbed a whole load of stuff onto the other tracks and we mixed the whole record at A&R Studios in New York City over a weekend. *Led Zeppelin II* was recorded in about 5,000 studios... Not literally, but it seems as if it was, you know. There was stuff done on the road, Vancouver, Los Angeles, etc, and I had to put all that together to make it sound like it was coming from a good source. So that was part of the challenge. The use of panning and reverb was something I loved to do. Certainly I did a lot of it with Jimi Hendrix and then, of course, carried it on with Mr Page – he and I always got on very well. It was a delight working with him because he was so precise. He knew exactly what he wanted.

VARIOUS ARTISTS WOODSTOCK: MUSIC FROM THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK AND MORE

ATLANTIC, 1970



Over a sleepless three days, Kramer records monumental sets from Hendrix, The Band, CSNY and more

We had to have vitamin B injections in the bum, absolutely, that's the only

thing that kept us going! It was three days and three nights of drugs and pills around you – obviously I was not into drugs, never have been – but there had to be a couple of sane, sober people there, recording and filming it. It was one of those magical historical moments that people have been trying to repeat with various degrees of success. It was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but I'm not so sure I'd want to do it again. The recording gear came from the Fillmore East. I had one piece of the trailer truck backstage, which had been set up as a control room with just a 12-channel console, two tape machines, one of them was on an orange crate. It was pretty primitive, I had no communication with the stage, it was just all done by hand signals. But we got it done. You can't even begin to imagine being onstage when you're looking out at half a million people – you go, "Holy shit." I remember standing on the stage, and Bill Graham says to me, "You know if all these people decide to riot we're fucked..." It all ended well, though, no rioting. Jimi started at nine o'clock on the Monday



Recording David Bowie for the "Fame" sessions in 1975

morning. Half the people had left, there was a sea of mud there, but Jimi's performance was inspirational, just phenomenal, one of the great performances of his career. When it got time for "The Star-Spangled Banner", it just was searing and mindblowing.

DAVID BOWIE YOUNG AMERICANS

EMI, 1975



With John Lennon in attendance, Kramer mans Bowie's sessions for "Fame" and other cuts destined for his 'plastic soul' album

I hadn't seen John since I'd done two tracks for The

Beatles, "All You Need Is Love" and "Baby You're A Rich Man". It was great to see him again. He came in to play rhythm guitar for Bowie – God, he was good, he was like a bloody metronome, didn't need a click track. Once that was down, the whole track was locked in. We did "Fame", and I think we did a B-side, too, "Across The Universe". It was fascinating to see how he interacted as just a session guy, not being John Lennon, but just a friend of David's who happened to play really good guitar. The story is Carlos Alomar was jamming the riff that became "Fame" and Bowie walked in and said, "Oi, I want that," and that started the process. Bowie had a very clear idea about what he wanted to do – I remember we adjusted the tape machine with the speed on each one of those passes [at the end of "Fame"], but it's very clever. Those guys were all bloody

fast. Bowie was brilliant about his choice of vocal takes, which ones to use.

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE FREEDOM: ATLANTA POP FESTIVAL

SONY, 2015



A rediscovered live set from 1970 is the latest posthumous Hendrix release, masterfully restored by Kramer

Did I do a lot to the recordings? You might say that. It was a lot of work.

I played every bloody part again! [laughs] No, you can never fix any of Hendrix's stuff, it's brilliant. It was a long process. We're very proud of all of the restorations that we get our hands on. It inevitably takes a long time because I'm very detailed and I examine it from every aspect. For me, the whole restoration thing is akin to an archaeological dig, in the sense that you go in with a little brush and scrape away the dirt and try to find the gems that lie beneath. This was Jimi at the height of his career – there were many highs of his career, of course. Certainly, though, I think the last iteration of the Experience [Hendrix with drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Billy Cox] was a very, very fine band indeed, and this is a nice performance. A 5.1 system really makes a hell of a difference to this, because you find yourself actually in the middle of the audience. 🎧

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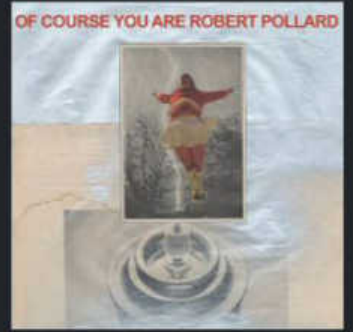


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HOOKWORMS

GR

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THE GOSPEL

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Tons Of Sobs:
The rise and fall of
Paul Kossoff. Or...
How a lion-maned
prodigy took on the
world with Free,
only to lose his way
when they split.
“Free was his whole
life. What does a
rock guitarist do,
if there’s no
rock guitar?”

Stacks of vibrato: Paul Kossoff live with Free at the Redcar Jazz Club, circa 1969





NATURAL TALENT

SPANISH STEPS

Simon Kossoff on Paul's passion for the guitar

"PAUL GOT interested in guitar very young, I think he was 10. And then he had no interest in anything else, although he loved to draw and was quite a good graphic artist. But it was the guitar that got hold of Paul – and rock music, rather than classical, but my father insisted that he have formal lessons. So we found him a teacher called Miss Monroe, who lived in Golders Green, and he had classical lessons for years. I think Paul's talent was almost a divine gift, really, when I look back on when I saw him play. It just came to him. So much so that when Miss Monroe would take him off to a recital, he would play Spanish guitar well. But even she didn't realise that he wasn't learning any of the written music she was trying to teach him; he was learning it by imitation. I think that's a fair indication of Paul's ability, and even she didn't spot it for ages. He wasn't reading the music, he was just following her hands. Presumably his vibrato came from these classical beginnings."

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS, JOHN DRYSDALE/KEYSTONE FEATURES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Kossoff live with Free, circa 1972

A

WEST LONDON'S Basing Street Studios in late 1972, Free gathered friends and industry figures together to watch them perform songs from their forthcoming album, *Heartbreaker*, and showcase their new lineup. Many observers believed 1973 was the year when these blues-rock pioneers would leave cult success behind to join the ranks of Led Zeppelin and The Who. The reality, however, was less promising. It transpired that new keyboardist John 'Rabbit' Bundrick had been drafted in to help out Paul Kossoff, the brilliant guitarist now so reliant on drugs that his pristine playing had become ragged and erratic. Some of the parts on *Heartbreaker* had been replayed by another guitarist, Snuffy Walden. The cracks were beginning to show live, too. During a break in their performance at Basing Street, Bundrick heard Steve Winwood comment, mystified, on the state of Kossoff's vibrato, which had now devolved from a smooth, fast tremolo to something slower and more alien. "It just used to sing," recalls Bundrick, "and then when Koss started losing it, his vibrato started sounding off-base."

WITHIN THE YEAR, Free had split for good. Meanwhile, Kossoff – whose lead lines still sparkle over songs such as "Wishing Well", "Oh I Wept" and "All Right Now" – died on March 19, 1976, aged 25, his talent cut short in a plane toilet somewhere over the continental United States.

"Free reformed to see Koss smile again," says drummer Simon Kirke. "But he was in worse shape than when we had split six months prior."

"There were no rehab clinics to my knowledge at that time," explains vocalist Paul Rodgers, "and Paul was out on his own. It remains a terrible tragedy that we lost him so young. I'm always going to miss him."

BY THE TIME that Paul Kossoff was "a lion-maned, precocious 13-year-old", according to his brother Simon, all he wanted to do was play the blues. He'd taken up the guitar aged 10, attending Spanish guitar lessons [see panel, left] at the behest of his father, the actor David Kossoff, and was soon playing in the blues clubs of north-west London. Kossoff had been brought up in a middle-class, creative family, but he began to rebel after his passion for music took hold. Uninterested academically, Paul was soon taken out of the private King Alfred School in Hampstead – "The school just turned their back on him," says Simon Kossoff – and enrolled in the local state school, Whitefield, in Barnet. Soon after, he started taking pills. "The first place he was ever introduced to it was a blues club in Golders Green when he was about 14," says Simon. "He was very quickly into uppers and downers."

Armed with a striking vibrato developed from his days playing nylon-stringed guitar, a gift for yearning lead lines, and a deep knowledge of the blues, the well-mannered, polite Kossoff was soon making waves with his own group, Black Cat Bones. "I first saw Paul at The Nags Head in Battersea," recalls Simon Kirke. "I was intrigued by the band's name. Straightaway I was knocked out by this diminutive guy and his playing. It was so passionate,

the others were like cardboard cut-outs next to him."

Producer Mike Vernon was similarly impressed when he saw Black Cat Bones at a later gig in Battersea, and set up Kirke and Kossoff with a recording session with New Orleans blues pianist Champion Jack Dupree. "It was very good," recalls Vernon of the session at Bond Street's CBS Studios on April 22, 1968. "I think Jack himself was quite taken with Paul's playing. 'That man's gone crazy!' he shouted during 'Jukebox Jump'."

Just a week after the sessions, Kossoff and Kirke left Black Cat Bones to form a new group with Rodgers and a former member of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Andy Fraser.

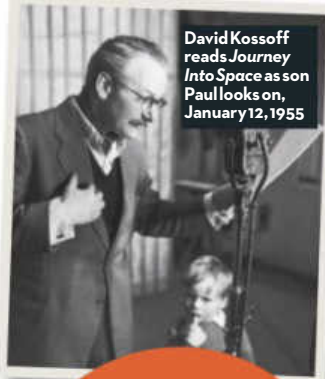
"I first saw Paul Kossoff when he was working at Selmer's Music Store," Rodgers tells *Uncut*. "There he was with his custom flared Levi's and handmade boots. He was sitting on an amp riffing on a guitar, and he sounded good. We were definitely on the same wavelength musically, despite our different backgrounds growing up. We were aware of many of the same records – Albert King's 'Born Under A Bad Sign', BB King's *Live At The Regal...* When we first played together at the Fickle Pickle in Finsbury Park we gelled instantly."

"Koss played his ass off," laughs Kirke, remembering the jam. "It was plain to see that he and Paul Rodgers both had a great empathy for each other's playing. Music was their common bond."

Free's rise was swift. Island's Chris Blackwell was tipped off, and he, Muff Winwood and Johnny Glover – head of the label's management company – went down to Studio 51 near Leicester Square to watch the group rehearse. "They were full-on," says Glover.

"Paul Rodgers couldn't have been more than 3ft from my face, with the mic stand twirling round, the whole shebang. They went for it, completely. It was incredibly aggressive. They thought they were the best band in the world, and wanted everybody else to think the same thing."

Within months of signing to Island, Free's live show – characterised by Rodgers' gritty vocals and Kossoff's fluid guitar work – was captured on their 1969 debut, *Tons Of Sobs*. Produced by Guy Stevens at London's Morgan Studios in two days, and featuring a thrilling version of Albert



"WHEN PAUL AND I FIRST PLAYED TOGETHER, WE GELLED INSTANTLY"
PAUL RODGERS

King's "The Hunter" alongside Rodgers originals including "Walk In My Shadow", *Tons Of Sobs* secured Free tours with The Who and Joe Cocker. One early fan was promoter Geoff Docherty, who put on the group at Sunderland's 800-capacity Bay Hotel for £35 in January, 1969.

"Free were a revelation," Docherty recalls. "They were young, and bursting with energy and talent. But there weren't many people there. However, when I got to the dressing room, there were loads of people waiting outside wanting to meet them. So I booked them again, and suddenly the place was packed."

By the summer of 1969, Free were supporting Blind Faith in America and – as Glover remembers – the number of fans devoted to Kossoff was swelling all the time. "He had that vibrato style that was unique to him – I don't think anybody before or since has been able to get that effect he had. On the Blind Faith tour, Eric Clapton sat with him on several occasions just to get Paul to play that to him, so he could see how he did it."

Free's second album, a self-titled effort produced by Blackwell and released in October 1969, was more varied than their debut – particularly, the acoustic "Mourning Sad Morning" featured Kossoff channelling the madrigal moods of John Renbourn. The following year was pivotal for Free. In May, "All Right Now" became an international hit, followed by their third album, *Fire And Water*, in June. But December 1970's low-key *Highway* failed to repeat the success of its predecessor. After incendiary gigs in Tokyo and Australia in May 1971, Fraser told Glover that the group would be cancelling their American tour and splitting immediately. The tension between Fraser and Rodgers – what the singer today calls "a huge difference of opinion in the musical direction of the band between myself and Andy" – had prematurely ended Free.

"We split because we were overworked," Kirke counters. "Tour, album, tour, album. We did a lot of gigs from '68 through 1970... I called it the 'flying W' tour, not one straight line in the whole schedule. All we needed was a few months off, but Island never listened. So Paul Rodgers and Andy decided, 'Fuck it, we're gonna break up.' It broke mine and Koss' hearts."



Free in '72: (l-r) Andy Fraser (rear), Paul Rodgers, Simon Kirke and Paul Kossoff

"NOBODY BEFORE OR SINCE HAS BEEN ABLE TO GET HIS VIBRATO EFFECT"

JOHNNY GLOVER



Though Glover contends that the arguments between Rodgers and Fraser were the primary reason for the split, he agrees that the result was the same. "For Paul Kossoff and Simon Kirke it was the biggest blow of their lives," he says, "because that band was their whole life. It was soon after that, Paul started taking pills, because he had literally nothing to do." Simon Kossoff and Rabbit Bundrick could also clearly see the pain the split had caused the guitarist. "Free was his whole life," his brother explains. "Paul was just lost, without a structure. What does a rock guitarist do, if there's no rock guitar?"

"Paul was happy in Free and he didn't want anything to change," adds Bundrick. "The only thing he wanted in his life was that band."

In his home near Portobello Road, Kossoff indulged extensively in pills, notably Mandrax, and reportedly dabbled with heroin, despite having a fear of needles. To his former bandmates, it was a surprise. "He was not a fit guy at the best of times, but these drugs really knocked him about," adds Kirke. "The plain truth was he became a drug addict, and his addiction went untreated properly until the day he died."

WITH FREE DEFUNCT, Kossoff and Kirke soon teamed up with Tetsu Yamauchi, a bassist they'd met in Japan, and Rabbit Bundrick, to form Kossoff, Kirke, Tetsu & Rabbit.

Their self-titled album, released in early 1972, featured some bold, experimental playing from Kossoff, now putting his guitar through a Leslie speaker. But Kirke suggests the lack of a strong vocalist left the quartet "well and truly fucked". Within six months, Kossoff got what he wanted, the return of Free; but things didn't exactly go to plan. "Although Andy and I put our differences aside to try to get Paul back on his feet," says Rodgers, "those same issues remained unresolved." After 1972's *Free At Last*, Fraser left the band for good, and the remaining trio drafted in Yamauchi and Bundrick to bolster Kossoff's shaky performances.

"Paul Rodgers was adamant he didn't want Koss in the band if he wasn't together," explains Johnny Glover, "so Koss got himself together. But there was huge pressure, and the problem he had was friends and fans all knew he liked pills, so they'd just give him them by

Flare play: Free at the Royal Albert Hall, London, February 11, 1972



“HE DAMN NEAR CRIED...”

Simon Kirke on Paul Kossoff's favourite musicians

“KOSSOFF LOVED Clapton, BB King,

Freddie King and Peter Green. Chicago's Terry Kath made a big impression on him, especially his playing on the first album, [1969's] *The Chicago Transport Authority*. He also turned me onto John Renbourn and Bert Jansch. But Hendrix completely bowled him over when he arrived on the scene. Jimi's chord work mesmerised Koss. We'd listen to his albums and try to slow them down and work out stuff. Hendrix's sound became a lightning rod for Koss... he wanted to get that sound Jimi got from going through a Leslie speaker. He actually got one – it weighed a ton, and the poor roadies had to carry it around. He loved Hendrix. The first time he heard ‘The Wind Cries Mary’ he damn near cried... me too. He was a bit of a blues snob actually, but we all loved The Beatles, and Paul Rodgers turned us on to Otis Redding, so Koss became a Steve Cropper fan. Free used to have listening nights at Andy Fraser's house in Roehampton. Every Tuesday night, we would each bring a couple of albums around and play them while we sat on the bed or sprawled on the floor. Those nights were as good as any rehearsal – better in some ways.”

the handful. If someone gave him 20 Mandies, he would take the whole lot in one go.”

Geoff Docherty had Free back to perform at the Newcastle Mayfair in September 1972, but Kossoff collapsed during the soundcheck and the gig was cancelled. “He was rushed to hospital unconscious,” remembers Docherty. “His face was ghostly white. He looked as though he was on his last legs. But within a couple of months he was back with Free.”

The guitarist was no longer able to operate as he had done in his prime, though, and as Free recorded their final album, *Heartbreaker*, in the closing months of 1972, they were forced to draft in American guitarist Snuffy Walden to assist. Kossoff's playing remained immediately recognisable, however, at its most biting on the driving opener.

“I wrote ‘Wishing Well’ as a fun tune to play live, but unconsciously it may have been about people I knew,” says Rodgers. He admits that some of “Come Together In The Morning”, *Heartbreaker*'s second track, refers to Kossoff's plight, too – “*There was a time, it's in the past/I thought our love was born to last/But now you say you are torn in two/That's what my love has done for you,*” he sings over a funereal soul groove.

To promote the album – the credits of which cruelly listed Kossoff as a guest musician – the group were forced to leave the unreliable guitarist at home, and take Osibisa's Wendell Richardson along instead. On their return, Paul Rodgers and Simon Kirke called time on the band, and formed Bad Company. “We split for the final time because we reformed for the wrong reasons,” says Kirke. “We were all so fucking ignorant back then.”

After the shock of being replaced for Free's final tour, Kossoff managed to record his only solo album, 1973's *Back Street Crawler*. Featuring his Free bandmates and Yes drummer Alan White, the record opened with the side-long “Tuesday Morning”, which showcased a noisier, dirtier Kossoff. In contrast, “Time Away”, a collaboration with John Martyn, was a spacey, atmospheric piece. As close to jazz as blues, it showed a future path for the guitarist's music; though one he never got to follow.

IN 1974, FREE'S early supporter Geoff Docherty was in London, and decided to call on his old friend. The clean-living promoter was shocked by what he encountered at Kossoff's house. “He was unconscious, just lying there,” recalls Docherty. “I said to [Kossoff's girlfriend] Sandy: ‘What's wrong?’ She said, ‘Oh Geoff, he's been taking drugs.’ While I was there, a drug dealer knocked on the door, and Sandy shook Paul rigorously. He crawled on all fours, just like a cat or a dog, pulled out a chequebook, crawled to the front door, got some drugs and swallowed them all. Back into unconsciousness. So I rang his dad and said, ‘Let me take him up to Sunderland and I'll get him fit.’”

“IF SOMEONE GAVE HIM 20 MANDYS, HE'D TAKE THE LOT IN ONE GO”

JOHNNY GLOVER



Once up north, Docherty kept Kossoff in his flat, feeding him on boiled fish, greens and fresh orange juice, and limiting access to his prescription drugs. “I was like a semi-tyrant,” Docherty says, “but he started getting better.”

After a few months of recovery, Kossoff told Docherty that he wanted to start a new band, so the promoter fixed him up with some musicians, including vocalist Terry Slessor, and sorted them some rehearsal time at a Sunderland bowling alley. Docherty hoped that he'd get to manage the group, but Kossoff was soon back in London, where Johnny Glover secured him a deal with Atlantic. Back in a place where dealers and fans knew where to find him, Kossoff plunged straight back into addiction. So in an attempt to keep him straight, Glover took the guitarist off to play with his friend John Martyn, a trip immortalised on *Live At Leeds*, recorded on February 13, 1975, at Leeds University. Kossoff's vices were now back in full force, however.

“After the Nottingham show we drove back and stopped at Watford Gap services,” recalls Glover, “and he disappeared for two days. He went to hospital and talked them into giving him some pills. He did it all the time. At Olympic Studios when we were finishing *Back Street Crawler*, he went to the toilet, jumped out of the window, got in his car completely off his trolley, and crashed into five or six vehicles driving home. Eventually, he dumped his car and walked.”

Kossoff's new band – also christened *Back Street Crawler* – soon ventured out on tour. Simon Kossoff, who had been blown away by Free at Croydon's Fairfield Hall a few years earlier, caught them at Glasgow Apollo a couple of months before the release of their debut, *The Band Plays On*: “It was

painful. He couldn't play, he was just standing around on the stage. The audience were shouting ‘Koss’, then they went quiet when they realised the state he was in.”

IN SEPTEMBER 1975, a month before the release of the band's debut LP, Kossoff became ill with a stomach ulcer and, while in hospital, his heart stopped. Though the medical team managed to get it beating again, he was in a coma for 24 hours and suffered from a blood clot in his legs. Some close to Kossoff hoped these events might be the impetus he needed to turn his life around. Simon Kossoff's wife, Annie,



Back Street Crawler in the studio, 1975: Terry Slessor second left, Kossoff far right

ST PAUL ON CD

FREE
ASSOCIATION

Kossoff's finest albums

**FREE
FIRE AND
WATER**

ISLAND, 1970

9/10

Free's low-slung third propelled the quartet into the big time, thanks to the lead single, "All Right Now". The finest tracks, though, are the slower, more menacing cuts, especially the melancholy "Oh I Wept", taking inspiration from Motown, and the tightly coiled, bluesier "Mr Big", featuring some powerhouse soloing from Kossoff.

**FREE
HIGHWAY**

ISLAND, 1970

8/10

Though it sold disappointingly at the time, Free's fourth album remains a more relaxed and pastoral delight, with Rodgers' voice sublimely

grainy on "Ride A Pony" and Kossoff, his playing still fluid and clean, beginning his experiments with the Leslie speaker.

**FREE
HEARTBREAKER**

ISLAND, 1973

7/10

Free were falling apart by this point, and yet their final album was strong – "Wishing Well" and "Heartbreaker" are two of Rodgers' most propulsive tracks, while Koss' distorted lead lines are now stinging and downright evil, far from the quicksilver reveries of Free's early years.

**PAUL KOSSOFF
BACK STREET
CRAWLER**

ISLAND, 1973

7/10

Kossoff's only solo album, self-produced after Free's final break-up, features some of the guitarist's heaviest, most psychedelic playing, especially on the 17-minute opener, "Tuesday Morning". The elegiac, Leslie-assisted "Molten Gold" featured the original Free lineup, a final testament to the group's rare chemistry.



With Back Street Crawler, Cornwall, 1975

remembers spending Christmas 1975 with the family, and noticing a positive change in Paul. "He had this determination to start another life. He was very reflective about the past and the future, and I felt optimistic. I thought, 'He's really turning a corner.'"

Soon after Christmas, Back Street Crawler, now featuring Bundrick, headed to Los Angeles to play and record their second album, *2nd Street*. Sessions were disrupted, however, when Kossoff attacked Johnny Glover in a hotel room. "I told him off for getting out of his trolley," remembers Glover. "He came flying across the room at me with this whiskey bottle. I'm bigger than him, so I stopped him and broke his little finger in doing so."

Once Kossoff's finger had healed, Back Street Crawler continued their tour, climaxing with four nights in early March 1976 at Hollywood's Starwood club. There, the group's run coincided with Bad Company's shows at the larger Forum. "Koss came to see me in my hotel," says Simon Kirke. "He was a bit out of it, quite sarcastic and unpleasant. Bad Company were a huge band then: we were living the dream. And here was Koss – who desperately missed Paul Rodgers – with his band, barely making ends meet. We went down to see them two nights in a row. The second night Paul came and sang, and Koss' face just lit up. He adored Paul."

"We played a lot of things that night," says Rodgers, "some Free, some Bad Company, some blues. And Koss was fantastic."

Neither Kirke nor Rodgers ever saw Kossoff again. After the group's Starwood shows, Crawler bassist Terry Wilson remembers entering Kossoff's Sunset Marquis hotel room to find him with "a good-looking blonde girl who they called Dale, and a guy sitting there with Koss. There were drugs out on the coffee table – I remember seeing pills, more than one type, probably Valium, and some kind of brown powder, probably heroin. I had it out with the girl about her bringing the drugs in. She slapped me pretty hard and told me that we didn't understand Koss, and that really pissed me off."

A few days later, on March 19, the group took a red-eye flight to New York, during which Kossoff swallowed some pills – the same ones, Wilson and Glover believe, given to him by 'Dale'. On landing in New York, a flight attendant unlocked the toilet cubicle door and found the guitarist's body. The coroner listed the cause of death as 'cerebral and pulmonary edema', though Simon Kossoff wonders in hindsight whether his brother should have been flying at all, considering that he'd suffered from a heart attack and blood clot only six months previously.



Kossoff with Terry Slesser, circa '75

**"ONCE
HE KNEW
FREE WAS
FINISHED,
I THINK HE
LOST ALL
HOPE"**
RABBIT
BUNDRICK

"It's entirely possible that he still pined for Free," suggests Johnny Glover, discussing Kossoff's drive to oblivion. "With the best will in the world, Back Street Crawler just wasn't the same as Free. They were lovely players, but Terry Slesser wasn't Paul Rodgers."

"If Free never would've broken up, Kossoff probably wouldn't have got sick," agrees Rabbit Bundrick. "I got the feeling that he was terribly unhappy. Once Kossoff knew Free was done and finished, I think that he lost all hope of ever getting that happiness back. He was a little angel, spending his time on Earth and doing his thing until it was his time to leave this Earth. That's all he lived for."

Simon Kossoff believes that his brother's amiable personality just didn't provide him with the armour needed in such a pressured industry. "I don't think Paul had that street-fighting quality, which was, you could say, to his credit, because he was universally liked, he made friends easily, he was never judgmental... but that kind of mild personality can be subject to terrible pressures, and then I think you resort to drugs. Everyone tried to help, but nobody won in the end. I think Paul may well have got beyond it if he could have, one way or another, stayed alive for a year or two more."

Paul Rodgers, the musical partner closest to Kossoff's heart, is especially candid when asked about how the guitarist matches up to the myriad other players he's worked with over the decades. "Well, Mick Ralphs comes close," he says, "Pete Bullick from Deborah Bonham's band is a mighty fine player, and Howard Leese from my solo band, too. But really, no-one can ever replace Paul." 🎸

Simon Kirke is working on a solo album with Chicago band The Empty Pockets, with a release expected in late spring; Geoff Docherty's latest book, Three Minutes Of Magic, concerning the pitfalls of managing bands, is out now; Mike Vernon & The Mighty Combo tour the UK in June 2016

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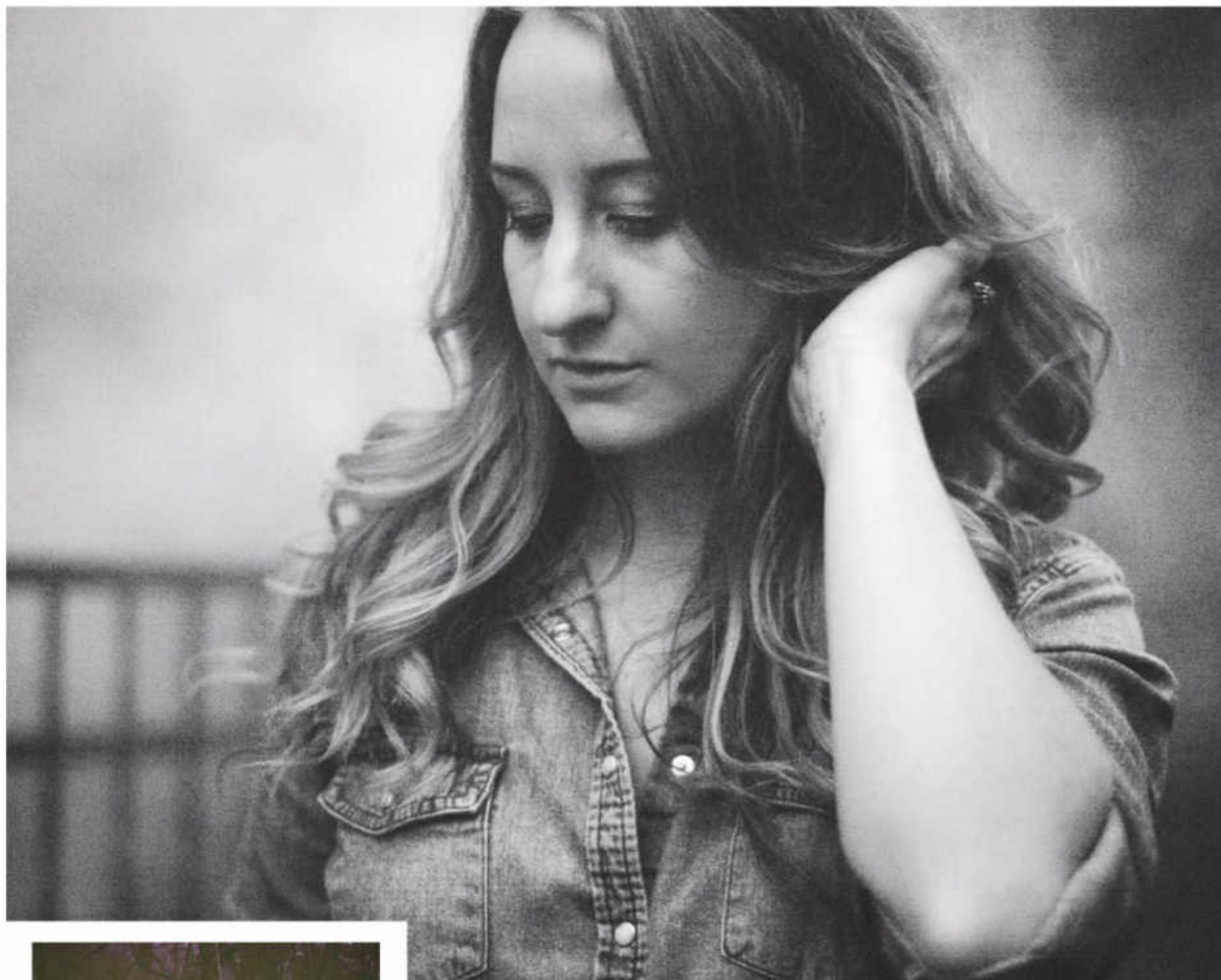


OUR SCORING SYSTEM:

10 Masterpiece 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good but uneven
4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

New albums

THIS MONTH: IGGY POP | VIOLENT FEMMES | M WARD & MORE



ANGELINA CASTILLO



MARGO PRICE

Midwest Farmer's Daughter

THIRD MAN RECORDS

Third Man's first country signing releases a worldly and unflinching debut. *By Laura Snapes*

8/10

IN 2015, COUNTRY music had an identity crisis.

Stetson or snapback?

'Authentic' or 'real'? Were breakthrough artists like Sturgill Simpson, Chris Stapleton and Kacey Musgraves even country, or Americana? What was Americana, actually? An industry consultant called female artists the unwanted 'tomatoes' of country radio's 'salad'; were you pro-lettuce or pro-tomato? If the latter, did you prefer bad girls, good girls or burnouts? And at its most basic, what did the critical distinction between 'good country'

and 'bad country' really boil down to? Art, or a nastier comment on class?

Margo Price is the first country artist to sign to Jack White's Third Man Records, a starry indie precedent that will definitely stoke this tedious debate. "Margo is here to save us all from the Starbucking of America," the label declared, provocatively. Based in Nashville, Third Man is credited with restoring the city's reputation for rock, although White's country credentials are well enshrined: he was inducted into the city's Walk Of Fame last summer alongside former collaborator

TRACKLIST

- 1 Hands Of Time
- 2 About To Find Out
- 3 Tennessee Song
- 4 Since You Put Me Down
- 5 Four Years Of Chances
- 6 This Town Gets Around
- 7 How The Mighty Have Fallen
- 8 Weekender
- 9 Hurtin' (On The Bottle)
- 10 World's Greatest Loser

New Albums

→ Loretta Lynn, and his love of female country voices was obvious from 2001, when The White Stripes covered Dolly Parton's "Jolene". What does it mean that this relative newcomer, situated 1.5 miles from the city's famed Music Row, is now brewing the local malt?

Price's excellent debut wastes absolutely no energy trying to address her place in the country-music ecosystem, and gets right to telling us who she is, rather than who she ain't (a dispiriting trope in the genre's identity wars). The title of *Midwest Farmer's Daughter* evokes Lynn's proud *Coal Miner's Daughter* appellation, and is a plainspoken nod to Price's own origins. It's backed up by opener "Hands Of Time", a capsule retelling of her hardscrabble life, which sounds almost improbably like the subject of a country song. She was born in smalltown Illinois; her dad lost the family farm when she was two, and went to work in a prison. Price quit college for Nashville, got exploited by sleazy managers, fell in with the wrong crowd and went to jail more than once. She worked humdrum jobs and eventually met her husband, who was already married. They formed the roots band Buffalo Clover, made a few albums, toured Britain and the US; they would routinely sell their possessions and try to leave town on tour (or otherwise), only to wind up back there again. Once settled, they had twins, but the firstborn died of a rare heart defect, and Price self-medicated to cope.

"Hands Of Time" is immensely graceful and stoic: Price recounts her story over tentative stand-up bass and subtle, shifting beds of strings and Fender Rhodes. Then the chorus hits, and she lets rip like her former bandmate Sturgill Simpson on "The Promise", pushing her high, twangy voice to its fullest cinematic potential as she faces the future. "*Cause all I wanna do is make my own path/Cause I know what I am, I know what I have/I wanna buy back the farm/And bring my mama home some wine/And turn back the clock on the cruel hands of time.*" Her fortitude sets the tone for

Price: "I wannabe able to give back..."



Midwest, which seldom wallows. There are a couple of ballads, and a few rounds of heavy sorrow-drowning, but their vibe is mostly, "Well, your loss." Instead, Price establishes that she knows the dignity a little money can bring, but very quickly makes clear that

she cherishes her self-worth too much to trade it for success.

There's some country music insider baseball here, though it's not bitter; more pitying of an exploitative industry's silly games and how they pale next to everything else Price has

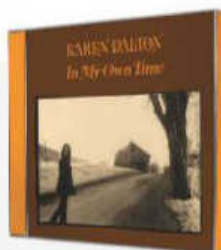
THE ROAD TO MIDWEST FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Four more powerful country and folk albums that convey "the dark side of life"



LORETTA LYNN... ...Writes 'Em And Sings 'Em

DECCA, 1970
With the exception of the Peggy Sue Wells co-write "You Wanna Give Me A Lift", *Writes 'Em...* was Lynn's first originally written album, compiling hits from the '60s with new material. It established Lynn's utterly uncompromising perspective on matters of domestic life.



KAREN DALTON In My Own Time

PARAMOUNT, 1971
Where Price's band is raring to go, Dalton's is laid-back and easy, but Dalton's knack for expressing loss and the desire to run suffuses *Midwest Farmer's Daughter*, and although the singers' voices may sound nothing alike, they have a shared knack for imbuing their words with affecting longing and disappointment.



GEORGE JONES I Am What I Am

EPIC, 1980
Jones' commercial and critical return to form foregrounded his soulful voice, in powerful, reaching performances that conveyed "the dark side of life", as he sang on "I've Aged 20 Years In Five": drinking, cheating, loss. Although he had no tracks on this album, Price's great-uncle, Bobby Fischer, regularly wrote for Jones.



KACEY MUSGRAVES Pageant Material

MERCURY, 2015
Musgraves is one of the most successful artists to break out of country in recent years, but her pro-weed, pro-gay, anti-establishment lyrics haven't always garnered the necessary support to succeed within her industry. *Pageant Material* is Musgraves' manifesto: do what you want, as long as it's not causing anyone else pain.

been through. “You wouldn’t know class if it bit you in the ass,” she sings at some bigwig on “About To Find Out”, an intoxicating slice of woozy honky-tonk. She ups the pace and adopts Dolly-style flair to twist the knife on “This Town Gets Around”, which exposes Nashville’s corrupt power structures: “It’s not who you know, but it’s who you blow that’ll put you in the show/And if that’s not the case, I hear you pay ‘em,” she sings, upping the ante of Kacey Musgraves’ “Good Old Boys’ Club”. “But I don’t come easy and I’m flat broke/ So I guess it’s me that gets the joke.”

Price is a comic lyricist who does a fine flipped country cliché: “Maybe I’d be smarter if I played dumb,” she sings on “This Town”, and on the yawping, boozy romp “Hurtin’ (On The Bottle)”, she observes, “You’re never too old to learn to crawl.” But most of the infectious fun of *Midwest* comes from the festive arrangements and Price’s almighty delivery. She and her sizeable band recorded at Memphis’ Sun Studios, and *Midwest* brings

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Matt Ross-Spang, Alex Munoz
Recorded at: Sun Studio, Memphis, TN
Mixed at: Ardent Studio, Memphis, TN
Personnel: Margo Price (vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonies, percussion), Jamie Davis (electric guitar), Eleonore Denig (violin), Micah Hulscher (piano, organ, Rhodes), Jeremy Ivey (bass, harmonica), Larissa Maestro (cello), Alex Munoz (dobro, mandolin), Dylan Napier (drums, percussion), Luke Schneider (pedal steel), Kristin Weber (fiddle, violin, harmonies)

with enviable natural twang. On “Four Years Of Chances”, Stevie Wonder-indebted Rhodes underpins Price’s shift from cool suspicion towards an ex who didn’t recognise what he had, to belting admonishment. She wavers at the start of acoustic closer “World’s Greatest Loser”, but quickly finds herself as a tremulous, lonesome balladeer in the style of Karen Dalton. Whichever mode, she absolutely sells every word, whether sung from the top of the world, the bottom of the bottle or the hard-won, half-full spot in between. *Midwest Farmer’s Daughter* is never preachy, and outside of its obvious villains, is uninterested in questions of good or bad. Just like the genre she inhabits, Price is too resilient and timeless to get bogged down in that stuff. As she sings over the sleepy walking bass of “Since You Put Me Down”, “Even if I fall from grace, I’m gonna land back on the ground.”



Q&A

Margo Price explains her musical calling and her real-life struggles: “I’ve been to jail more than once...”

WHEN DID MUSIC become your calling? I got my first guitar after middle-school graduation and started to pick out songs. Around 18, 19, I started to practise every day, writing my own stuff. As I was about to enrol for my third year of college, I dropped out and went to Nashville.

Why the move? I came down for Spring Break. I loved it so much, I began looking for an apartment. I started going to the writers’ rounds and the clubs. I had maybe planned on going back to school, but after I got here, I realised that I was getting a good education through real-life experiences.

But soon people started screwing you over... I was trying to figure out how to make money. I met a gentleman who seemed well-connected. He had a huge studio, so I went there. He put something in my drink and it became really frightening. I was really lucky I got out without getting hurt.

Didn’t you move to Colorado to live in a tent? Yes. My husband and I had been floundering, working lots of dead-end jobs. We felt defeated by Nashville, so we sold everything to try another city. He knew of this abandoned road you could camp on for free. We would busk until we had enough money for food and wine, then start again the next day. You tire of showering at the YMCA, so we came back to Nashville. It was a good adventure. We stayed about a month and a half.

Is that what “Tennessee Song” is about? Less that time, but we left a couple of other times as well. It’s this long-running joke that no matter what we do, if we try to leave, we end up back in Nashville. I think there’s a love-hate thing that goes along with it, especially when you’re failing in the music business.

You sing about a jail spell in “Weekender”. What did you do? I’ve been to jail more than once, but when I wrote that song it was just a weekend – I wrote it there. To protect my grandmother, I’ll say “no comment”. I was running with the wrong people late at night, acting a little bit recklessly.

How long did it take to make this album? For several years I had wanted to make a country record. I had the songs, but not the financial

means. The time came that I knew I had to get them out, about three years ago.

You’ve described it as a concept album about your life. I decided to write very honestly, and when I looked at all of the songs, I realised how personal they were. It was really strange to realise that I had done that by accident. I’m glad I did.

You’ve said before that it’s hard for you to be that vulnerable. What drew it out? There’s other people who’ve had the same struggles: I know other musicians who can relate to being pushed around; and regarding losing my son, and how it affected me, I wanna be able to give back.

Which albums did that for you? I love Willie Nelson’s *Phases And Stages*, there’s so many songs from The Band and Dylan that have gotten me through hard times, like “Tears Of Rage”. I love Karen Dalton’s *In My Own Time*, and Skip James.

What took you to Memphis to record? I had recorded at so many Nashville studios, and I think it goes back to me feeling like I didn’t belong here. We happened to be travelling through Memphis on our way to Texas and stopped to do Sun’s guided tour. I really felt the magic.

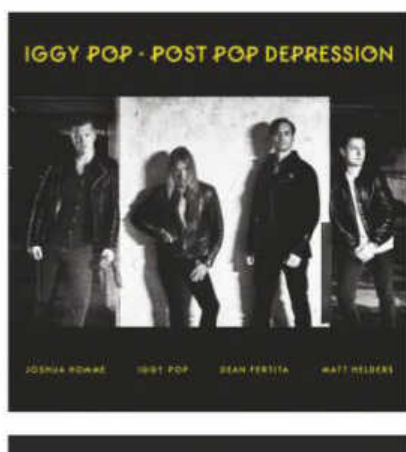
Do you still feel like an outcast in Nashville? Not really. I feel like people respect what I’m doing. That’s a nice feeling. I’ve found my home: Third Man is just a little ways off Music Row – not a great part of town, but it feels right.

You’ve said they didn’t want you to change anything about the LP. Did other labels want to mould you? One label wanted to add more rock and soul. I’d just done that with a band; it wasn’t working for me. A couple of large labels had me in. I’d meet these women who seemed totally perplexed by what I was doing: “You’re not a hillbilly, but you play real country music?” Third Man was happy that it was recorded at Sun, that it was analogue.

You have your Grand Ol’ Opry debut soon. What does it mean to you? I’ve dreamed about it my whole life. I’m so glad my grandmothers are here to witness it. They both instilled a huge love of country music in me. **INTERVIEW: LAURA SNAPES**

“I was running with the wrong people, acting a little bit recklessly”

(l-r) Matt Helders, Dean Fertita, Iggy Pop and Josh Homme



TRACKLIST

- 1 Break Into Your Heart
- 2 Gardenia
- 3 American Valhalla
- 4 In The Lobby
- 5 Sunday
- 6 Vulture
- 7 German Days
- 8 Chocolate Drops
- 9 Paraguay

IGGY POP Post Pop Depression

CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

American seizure: Josh Homme oversees King Stooge's death trip. *By Jim Wirth*

8/10

HAVING JUST ABOUT held it in for 38 minutes, Iggy Pop's personal dam bursts in the closing moments of his 17th solo album, the 68-year-old unleashing an extraordinary tirade at the climax of escape fantasy "Paraguay".

"You take your motherfucking laptop, and just shove it into your goddamn foul mouth, and down your shit-heel gizzard, you fucking phony two-faced, three-timing piece of turd," he rasps breathlessly. "And I hope you shit it out with all the words in it, and I hope the security services read those words, and pick you up and flay you for all your evil and poisonous intentions, because I'M SICK and it's YOUR FAULT, and I'm gonna go heal myself now." Amid the

unredeemed darkness of *Post Pop Depression*, that final phrase may represent the sole note of hope.

Recorded in secret with Queens Of The Stone Age's Josh Homme and Dean Fertita as well as Arctic Monkeys drummer Matt Helders, the mission may have been to recapture the wildness of Pop's Berlin-era albums with David Bowie – *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*. However, Homme's superbly Bowie-esque backing vocals do little to rekindle the self-possessed optimism of those records. *Post Pop Depression* is unrelentingly bleak; a meditation on mortality and regret, which – unlike the standard post-Time Out Of Mind outing by a Saga holiday-aged pop star – offers no soft-focus reverberation and precious little comfort either side of the grave.

Q&A

Dean Fertita



You recorded in secrecy in Joshua Tree, California; why was that?

Nobody needed to know what was happening and if we didn't like what we were doing, we knew we could just drive out into the middle of the desert and bury it and no-one would ever know it existed.

The lyrics are very dark. Did that surprise you? If you had looked at this on paper and seen the guys who were on the record, you would have expected it to sound a certain way, but at this stage of [Iggy's] career we felt we could make a record with him that relied more on the content being heavy. We think he is maybe one of the most underrated lyricists

in American music - he is so good at expressing something that people can understand simply, but there is a lot of subtext there.

Iggy's rant at the end of "Paraguay" is incredibly powerful. How did it come about?

That was absolutely spur of the moment. We had done three or four versions of that song and each one was completely different. He had no lyrics in front of him. I was ecstatic that we had a moment like that. There's been some talk within our little group that this could be his last record, but you don't know for sure. My hope is that he is super-inspired by what we did and makes 10 more records, but if it is the last thing he does, I am just proud to have been in the room when he said what he said. And if he stops, he stops on a high.

INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH

trudging weekend-wards on "Sunday". A crushing, low-slung guitar riff on "In The Lobby", meanwhile, accompanies a depiction of a streetwalking cheetah going joylessly through the motions. *"And it's all about the edge, and it's all about the dancing kids, and it's all about the sex, and it's all about done,"* Pop smoulders, concluding bitterly. *"I follow my shadow tonight."* Berlin memoir "German Days", for its part, recalls not the excitement of exploring the city's ripped backside but a world of crappy clip joints. *"Glittering champagne on ice,"* Pop ululates over a lugubrious beer-hall squelch. *"Garish, overpriced."*

The past and the present are sullied, but the future is grimmer still. Ennio Morricone death bells clang over the sullen "Chocolate Drops" and the hateful "Vulture", as Pop attempts to shoo away those who would one day pick at his bones, while the raw, powerful "American Valhalla" confronts the afterlife with a shudder over a glowering bass thud: *"Is anybody in there? And can I bring a friend?"*

The characters depicted here, however, might be too far gone for friendship, and wobbly BBC Radiophonic keyboards on opener "Break Into Your Heart" cannot mask the misanthropy within. Pop's search-and-destroy conclusion on sexual partners: *"Break them all, take them all, fake them all, steal them all, fail them all."*

However, if the cruel world of *Post Pop Depression* is eat or be eaten, Pop knows he is no longer predator but prey. Nick Cave's Grinderman project explored male-pattern entropy with a wink, but with this wounded howl of a record, Pop stubbornly refuses to see the funny side. Grimly compelling, it concludes with Pop's "Everybody's Talkin'" of the damned, "Paraguay", its protagonist trudging off to the jungle with what remains of his Yankee dollars. *"I'm going where sore losers go,"* he grunts. *"To hide my face and spend my dough."* Like the rest of *Post Pop Depression*, it sounds like a resignation speech.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Josh Homme

Recorded at: Rancho De La Luna, Pink Duck Studios, both California

Personnel include:

Iggy Pop (vocals), Josh Homme (vocals, guitar, bass, keys, percussion), Matt Helders (drums, backing vocals), Dean Fertita (guitar, keyboards)

Talking to *The New York Times*, Pop was eager to put some distance between himself and his album's dour side. "I had a kind of character in mind," he noted. "It was sort of a cross between myself and a military veteran." However, the anger, the exhaustion here, sounds very much his own. *"I've shot my gun, I've used my knife,"* he mutters sorrowfully on "American Valhalla". *"It hasn't been an easy life."*

Times have indeed been tough for Pop; even before Bowie's departure this January, the deaths of fellow Stooges Ron and Scott Asheton (in 2009 and 2014, respectively) had robbed him of key co-combatants. And, in between the insurance ads, his attempt to subvert his 'godfather of punk' image with oddball chanson collection *Après* foundered when his record label, Virgin EMI, refused to release it. "They would have preferred that I do a rock album with popular punks, sort of like: 'Hi Dad!'" he seethed, as he snuck *Après* out independently in 2012. "What has a record company ever done for me but humiliate and torment and drag me down?"

Humiliation is everywhere on *Post Pop Depression*; the down-on-her-luck beauty of the lava-lamp-lit "Gardenia"; the cowed wage slave

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

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THE 1975

I Like It When You Sleep, For You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware Of It

DIRTY HIT

Indie boy-band branch out spectacularly

7/10

On the basis of their chart-topping 2013 debut, it was easy to dismiss The 1975 as insipid pop-rockers, bred in a record company petri dish for girls who'd outgrown One Direction. Not so easy now. Their second album is a staggeringly ambitious/preentious 17-track splurge, taking in tricksy R&B, M83-style dreampop and an ambient electronic interlude called "Please Be Naked". Its most effective mode is a kind of dense, plasticky '80s funk-pop, exemplified by "Love Me" and "Ugh!", which lands somewhere between Usher and Go West. Overblown and occasionally excruciating, *I Love It...*'s fearless perversity nonetheless puts most 'alternative' bands to shame.

SAM RICHARDS

STEVEN JAMES ADAMS

Old Magick

FORTUNA POP!

Alt. pop anti-hero's leaner, solo second

"You are welcome here," croons Adams over emollient guitar chords

7/10

at the start of his second album's first track, "Togetherness". Then, "You've been taken for a ride." It's a typically sharp uppercut (to the UK's attitude to immigrants) from the former lynchpin of The Broken Family Band and Singing Adams. Here, with pianist and producer Dan Michaelson, he leaves the latter's indie-pop jangle with BFB's gruffer alt.country, in barbed, modern-life chronicles that suggest Paul Heaton as a kindred spirit. As the deceptively swinging "Kings Of The Back Of The Bus" has it: *"We were the guys with the sparks in their eyes and now it's just New Age bullshit."*

SHARON O'CONNELL

JUST SAY NO DRUGS



SLEEVE NOTES

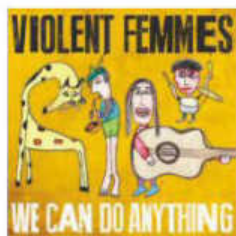
Produced by: Jeff Hamilton
Recorded at: BC Studios, Brooklyn; Brown Owl Studios, Nashville; Hamtone Audio, Milwaukee; CCM, Denver; Village Recorders and Freshkills West, LA
Personnel includes: Gordon Gano (vocals, gtr), Brian Ritchie (bass, vocals), Brian Viglione (drums, vocals), John Sparrow (bass cajon), Jeff Hamilton (gtr, mandolin, banjo, uke, vocals, perc), Blaise Garza (sax, contrabass, bass), Kevin Hearn (gtr, acc, piano, organ, vocals)

VIOLENT FEMMES

We Can Do Anything

ADD IT UP/PIAS

Back at last, with a fresh and natural ninth, says *Graeme Thomson*



8/10

NOT SO MUCH a boast as an expression of amused incredulity, the title of Violent Femmes' ninth studio album is an acknowledgement that few comebacks have ever been quite so unlikely. Arriving 16 years after their last studio record, and

some 33 since Gordon Gano, Brian Ritchie and Victor DeLorenzo first patented their frenetic, fantastically snotty blend of folk, punk, indie and country, *We Can Do Anything* is a testament to sheer cussedness as much as an act of renewed creativity.

Violent Femmes' first two albums – 1983's exuberant eponymous debut and its darker, more exploratory follow-up, *Hallowed Ground* – remain essential, and they were rarely less than terrific during the '80s, but the quality tailed off following 1991's underrated *Why Do Birds Sing?* and the departure of DeLorenzo in 1993. In the aftermath of the underwhelming *Freak Magnet* in 2000, Gano's decision to license their classic single "Blister In The Sun" to a burger company infuriated Ritchie, who sued his bandmate while declaring that he had "lost his songwriting ability many years ago".

And that, it seemed, was that, until the bulging coffers of Coachella inspired a change of heart. Faced with an offer they couldn't refuse, Violent Femmes reformed for the festival in 2013, and began touring again. Last year they released a new EP and started work on *We Can Do Anything*, recorded piecemeal in several US studios, with Gano, Ritchie and Dresden Dolls drummer Brian Viglione joined by a handful of old friends.

It wasn't always easy, according to Gano, whose

muse appears to be a more elusive mistress than she once was. *We Can Do Anything* clocks in at a mere 30 minutes. Three of the ten tracks are co-writes, one is a cover, and the rest are based on ideas which date back years, sometimes decades.

Given this fragile state of affairs, they wisely choose to play to their strengths. This is an instantly familiar mix of anti-folk, post-punk, phantasmagorical country and alternative rock, delivered via an equally recognisable blend of raw acoustic guitars, thrumming acoustic bass and rattling snare, garnished with Gano's petulant whine. The singer was at school when he wrote the first two Violent Femmes album, and even at 52 he appears to be in an arrested state of aggrieved teenage-hood, locked in psychological warfare with mocking jocks and sneering prom queens. The album's stand-out track, "Big Car", dates back to the late '80s and is a macabre revenge fantasy which begins with Gano cruising with a high-school "teenage tart". With each verse the mood darkens, until the final line delivers a brutal sting in the tail.

It's classic Gano – simultaneously funny, transgressive and deeply unsettling. He's rarely shy about letting his hang-ups hang out. "Foothills", which recalls the carefree stomp of "American Music", casts him as a grudge-holding menial – "my boss is a jerk" – while "Issues" is an amusing portrait of a man outwardly scornful of his partner's over-sharing, but secretly turned on by their relentless neediness. Upbeat opener "Memory" manages to be both regretful and spiky. Even "I

Could Be Anything", the child-friendly tale of a heroic dragon-slaying knight called Sir Bongo, turns into a bizarre

underdog fantasy. Leaping between several different styles and time signatures, it's the most eccentric and musically complex track on the LP.

Everything feels remarkably fresh and unforced. The deceptively sweet-toothed doo-wop of "Untrue Love" might seem a tad rote, and the herky-jerky "Travelling Solves Everything" is a misfire, but the reflective, heartfelt "What You Really Mean" better indicates the depth of quality. Written by Gano's sister, Cynthia Gayneau, and fleshed out with soft horns and rippling piano, it harks back to the unabashed tenderness of "Good Feeling" and "I Know It's True, But I'm Sorry To Say".

All that's lacking are the lowering shadows which appeared on the greatest Violent Femmes record, *Hallowed Ground*. Gano's father was a Baptist minister, and many of his best songs are soaked in old-time religion. There's none of that holy terror here, sadly, although the ramshackle country-gospel of "I'm Not Done" finds Gano "wild in the sight of God".

It's the closing track on an album which works equally well as a final curtain or a new chapter. The band themselves seem unsure which it might turn out to be. "*We came together, we broke apart*," Gano sings, throwing out mixed messages to the last. "*It has ended; it will not restart*." And yet, "*With all of this, we're not done*." Here's hoping.

Q&A

Gordon Gano



Given all that's happened, Violent Femmes seem remarkably well preserved.

Absolutely! It sounds fresh and natural. People ask, "Is it similar to how it used to be?" It's more than similar, it's exactly the same! The majority of it was recorded live, and in some cases it was the first time people were hearing these songs, so it's very in-the-moment. I find the title humorous, because for us all to get in one room at the same time and play some songs, we've done something miraculous.

What is the provenance of these songs? They date from all over. Probably the oldest are "I Could Be Anything" and "Big Car", they go back 25 years or so. I've attempted to play "Big Car" with Violent Femmes over the years, and there have always been dissenters. It almost didn't make it this time. It's a fun song, then it's really creepy, and then this horror takes place, but I made the argument that if we dropped it for those reasons then we shouldn't be watching any Coen Brothers movies either. And of course there are other songs like that in our catalogue.

What does the future hold? We take it a piece at a time. We have a tour Down Under, and we hope to get to the UK and Europe. I hope it all comes together, but let me check my email and see what happened today! INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON



**FATIMA
AL QADIRI**
Brute
HYPERDUB

Still Ballardian, still brilliant
"You are no longer peacefully assembling," announces a police

8/10

voice; that the police are the brutes of the title is clear, too, from the doctored SWAT team member on the cover. On her second album, Al Qadiri gives us a particular take on urban dystopia inspired in particular by her adopted home country, the United States. The titles – "Endzone", "Curfew", "Battery" – and siren-like synthesisers are haunting. And though the sonic palette, beautiful and immersive, warms like a hot mug in the frost, the dubstep-derived hints of double-time, perpetually held in reserve, create the ominous feeling of an attack dog straining at the leash.

MARCUS O'DAIR



BE
One
RIVERTONES

Natural ambient drones from Spiritualized and a chorus of 40,000 bees

For the 2015 Milan Expo, artist Wolfgang Buttress created a hive-

6/10

like structure to highlight the plight of the honey bee. This is the soundtrack, featuring various members of Spiritualized (plus Youth, singer Camille Buttress and Icelandic string players Amiina) improvising along to a live audio feed from a beehive in Nottingham. For an album of limited harmonic scope – these particular bees buzz in the key of D – there is an impressive sense of narrative, as the crackling tension of "Uplift" gives way to the blissful release of "The Hive". What could have been a gimmick turns out to be a meditative mind-meld of man and insect.

SAM RICHARDS



BIG UPS
Before A Million Universes
TOUGH LOVE/
BRACE YOURSELF

Unnerving New Yorkers' second album

8/10

New York punks Big Ups work hard to unsettle the audience, switching between tunes taut enough to decapitate a walrus ("Feathers Of Yes") and frantic, pummelling, bullying rockers ("National Parks"). Joe Galarraga's vocals also veer from shrieking, on the drilling repetition of "Contain Myself", to the terrific "Meet Where We Are", with a whispered, mumbling lead and accompanying arrangement that is jazz loose, making the song sound rather like beatnik hardcore. Through it all, as on debut *Eighteen Hours Of Static*, there's a sinister feel, as if you are being sometimes stalked and sometimes assaulted, often, as in the case of "So Much You", in the same song.

PETER WATTS



ÅRABROT
The Gospel
FYSISK FORMAT

Norwegian noise-rockers' refined assault with help from members of Swans and Sunn O)))

7/10

Despite the band's associations with the Scandinavian metal scene, Årabrot's *Solar Anus* (2011) owed a greater debt to the post-hardcore of The Jesus Lizard and Melvins. With its wild swings between pummelling dirges and more symphonic exercises in doom-mongering, seventh album, *The Gospel*, evokes the more artistically ambitious but no less menacing likes of Killing Joke and Swans (the latter's ex-drummer Ted Parsons contributes, as does Sunn O))) guitarist Stephen O'Malley). "Faustus" produces a spike in the overall intensity, while the Bad Seeds "I Run" serves as a more compact demonstration of Årabrot's ferocity.

JASON ANDERSON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Big Ups



➤ "I think that being labelled a punk band is reductive at times, because it ignores the whole canon of musical history that surrounds it," says Joe Galarraga, frontman of New York-based Big Ups. And while the four-piece have much of the anger, pace and claustrophobia of US punk, they are not simply hardcore thrashers. This is partly because the quartet met while studying music in New York. "We studied such a range of things, from recording and production, to music history," says Galarraga. "The whole experience exposed us to a wide range of possibilities. I feel like I've learned as much listening to romantic-era music as I have by listening to Fugazi."

It's that sense of the unexpected that makes *Before A Million Universes* such a notable step-up from their debut, *Eighteen Hours Of Static*. "We definitely took it more seriously," says Galarraga. "The recording process itself was not terribly different, but our attitude certainly was. I think, in terms of writing the songs, we come up with the parts based on how we would like the songs to feel and not necessarily focused on a style. It doesn't seem right to limit ourselves in what kind of sounds we can use in our music."

PETER WATTS



BLACK PEACHES
Get Down You Dirty Rascals
1965

Groovy Southern rock from the sixth Hot Chip

7/10

Hot Chip utility man Rob Smoughton used to perform solo as Grovesnor, a yacht-rock crooner whose arch persona concealed some terrific songs. His new group Black Peaches ditches (most of) the irony for an unexpected plunge into the bayou, serving up funky Southern rock with lashings of Latin percussion. It's impeccably performed, the creamy pedal steel and darts metaphors of "Double Top" setting the tone for an album of very British Americana. Black Peaches never let rip like a White Denim or a Howlin' Rain, but in the same way that Hot Chip have made their awkwardness an asset, this reserved take on Southern rock has charms of its own.

SAM RICHARDS



PETE AVES
See How
STRESS TESTED

Journeyman guitarist resumes solo career
Aves has played guitar for The High Llamas, Lee Hazlewood and Nick Lowe, among many others.

7/10

As this first solo album since 2007's *You, Me And Bill Withers* attests, he's an engaging singer-songwriter whose instinctive, winning wryness takes the edge off some occasionally ruggedly confessional material – "Rien De Rien" and "The Complainant" in particular are unsparingly realistic depictions of modern heartbreak. Lighter moments include "Cold Llamas", an account of a wrong turning on the road, and a surprising samba cover of Pharrell's "Happy". There's a touch of Richard Thompson about the guitar, and something of Teddy Thompson about the voice: it's not a bad combination.

ANDREW MUELLER



BENT SHAPES
Wolves Of Want
SLUMBERLAND

Taut, tough indie-pop, brief but bolshy

6/10

A heavy gang from Boston, Bent Shapes sit neatly within the kind of literate, fiercely intelligent pop that labels like Slumberland specialise in, the band's occasional surface whimsy masking turbulent depths. They demonstrate a smart way with melody, threading hooks that catch around tightly wound three-piece physicality. They could do with adding a bit of mystery to their armoury – there's a clarity and earnestness to some of *Wolves Of Want* that can underwhelm – but the group come with a clutch of great songs that would sit nicely on a long-awaited third volume of Modern Method's compilation series *A Wicked Good Time!*.

JON DALE

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS

The Narrows

YEP ROC

Captivating solo work from distinguished US songwriter

Such are the caprices of time that Grant-Lee Phillips is probably better known in the US for his recurring role on *Gilmore Girls* than he is for leading one of the '90s' finest exports, Grant Lee Buffalo. His USP remains pretty much the same: thoughtful, erudite roots-rock that pulls from long-held traditions of folk, country and blues.

8/10

His eighth solo album often feels like a personal portrait of selfhood and loss. It's informed mainly by both the death of his father, in 2013, and his own Native American heritage (Phillips is from Creek and Cherokee descent), a connection that's deepened

since his recent move to Tennessee from California. *The Narrows*, he says, is "the most Southern record that I've made, allowing me to wear my influences on my sleeve more gallantly".

Heading up a core trio of bassist Lex Price and drummer Jerry Roe, whose father, Dave, played bass with Johnny Cash, Phillips has created a warm, intimate record with an agreeably grainy veneer. The gorgeous "Moccasin Creek" is an imagistic ancestral piece – full of old arrowheads, wildwood flowers and overgrown burial plots – that acts as a corollary to the familial themes explored on 2012's *Walking In The Green Corn*. Likewise, "Yellow Weeds" pokes through a sepia past, guided by pedal steel and some filmy acoustic blues.

"Cry Cry", meanwhile, is an impassioned commentary on the Indian Removal of the 1800s that saw generations of Native Americans forcibly ejected from the South, thousands dying in the process. A political element also surfaces in "Holy Irons", which interweaves Southern history with the plight of an innocent draftee sucked into a war that's not of his choosing. Like most everything on *The Narrows*, it's a bittersweet study of fate and circumstance that resonates long after it's over.

ROB HUGHES



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

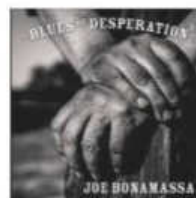
► Acclaimed documentary *Heartworn Highways*, James Szalapski's fascinating study of the Outlaw Country scene in Tennessee and Texas during the mid-'70s, gets the deluxe treatment this

April. Light In The Attic's reissue boasts a restored DVD (with 45 minutes of bonuses, including performances by Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark and others), an 80-page book and a double-album soundtrack on whiskey-coloured vinyl. Housed in a handcrafted wooden box, it's limited to 1,000 copies for Record Store Day.

The same month also sees the release of *Upland Stories*, the ninth album from US roots master **Robbie Fulks**, fresh from his recent collaboration with The Mekons.

Produced by Steve Albini, it's partly inspired by novelist James Agee's trip to Alabama in 1936, the result of which was his scathing commentary on rural poverty, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Other songs derive from tales of the upland areas of Virginia and North Carolina, where Fulks grew up. Texan songwriter **Hayes Carll**, meanwhile, is set to release *Lovers And Leavers*, recorded in LA with Joe Henry at the controls. "There are very few hoots and almost no hollers," Carll says of his first effort in five years. "But it's joyous, and it makes me smile."

And on the live front, the **CMA Songwriters Series** returns to the UK on March 10. Indigo2 at London's O2 plays host to Ashley Monroe, Charles Esten, Shane McAnally, Lori McKenna and Charlie Worsham. ROB HUGHES



JOE BONAMASSA

Blues Of Desperation

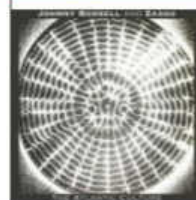
PROVOGUE

Love-him-or-hate-him blues champ does it again

7/10

The biggest-selling bluesman since Stevie Ray Vaughan, few divide opinion like Bonamassa. The follow-up to 2014's *Different Shades Of Blue* (Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic) is rooted in his devotion to 1960s/'70s British blues-rock – and the awkward notion of white American brat copying inauthentic Brits who stole from poor Southern blacks may explain some of the antipathy. Set aside that notion, though, and *Blues...* reveals itself to be a barnstorming triumph that channels Led Zep ("This Train"), Free ("Mountain Climbing"), early Fleetwood Mac ("No Good Place"), Jeff Beck ("Distant Lonesome Train") and even Dire Straits ("Drive") into something fresh and invigorating.

NIGEL WILLAMSON



JOHNNY BORRELL & ZAZOU

The Atlantic Culture

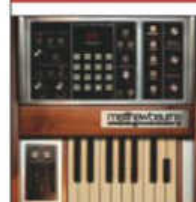
ATLANTIC CULTURE

The ongoing jazz revelations of the former Razorlight frontman

5/10

While the mid-2000s indie dream limps on elsewhere, Johnny Borrell has ditched Razorlight for louche jazzers Zazou. Undeterred by the failed Zazou debut and the Trevor Horn-produced *Borrell 1*, Borrell veers further from pop here, embracing Lalo Schiffrin ("Zazou's Theme"), Stevie Wonder ("Black God"), New Orleans jazz ("The Ego Song") and sax; "We Cannot Overthrow" is a soulful update of its *Borrell 1* incarnation, though undermined by eye-popping lyrics about Borrell's bedroom. The musicianship is interesting, and Borrell's ambitious misfires are infinitely more captivating than watching Kaiser Chiefs tilt towards the teatime masses.

LAURA SNAPES



MATTHEW BOURNE

Moogmemory

THE LEAF LABEL

One vintage machine, multiform pleasure

7/10

Matthew Bourne is both a strikingly talented jazz/improv musician and a boldly adventurous composer. Following *Radioland*, on which he teamed up with French composer Franck Vigroux to reconfigure Kraftwerk's *Radio-Activity*, he tasked himself with writing and performing a song set using only his (upgraded) 1982 Memorymoog. What might have been a dry academic exercise is in fact a seductive display of its polyphonic subtleties, which Bourne bends into mood-shifting soundscapes. The opening track occupies the peculiar space where a flutter becomes a judder, while standout "On Rivock Edge" is fantastically malevolent, an epic drone that suggests Sunn O))) soundtracking *The Fog*.

SHARON O'CONNELL



**AZIZA
BRAHIM**
**Abbar El
Hamada**
GLITTERBEAT

**Desert rock and
beyond from
Sahrawi legend**

7/10

A potent voice on the breathtaking *Sahrauis: The Music Of The Western Sahara* compilation from 1998, Aziza Brahim has long been a key figure in Sahrawi music. Following 2014's *Soutak*, on *Abbar El Hamada* she has worked once again with Glitterbeat owner, and leader of Americana legends The Walkabouts, Chris Eckman, resulting in the most focused of her four albums so far. If anything, it can feel a little too smoothed out, and some more grit in the production wouldn't go astray. But as a singer in, and of, exile, Brahim's voice and words are perfectly poised, pulling no punches. A salutary listen.

JON DALE



BUIKA
Vivir Sin Miedo
EAST WEST

**Spanish-African
diva breaks for the
mainstream**

8/10

Before she became a world-music icon singing flamenco with a Latin-jazz twist, Concha Buika performed in casinos as a Tina Turner imitator. Her seventh album doesn't quite turn full circle to reinvent her as an R&B queen, but having relocated from Madrid to Miami, it's an unashamed and audacious bid for crossover success, adding contemporary urban, reggae, raga and gospel flavours to the flamenco beats, Latin and African rhythms of past releases. Singing in English for the first time, it's a near-flawless, heroic reinvention as her husky, fiery voice evokes the imperious spirit of Nina Simone or an unstoppable, Latin-tinged Erykah Badu.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



BULLION
Loop The Loop
DEEK

**London beat freak's
sumptuous plastic soul**
Bullion's Nathan Jenkins is a fastidious producer in the mould of Godley & Creme, whose much

8/10

dithered-over debut has been a long time coming. His run of EPs and mixes for hip labels Young Turks and R&S hinted at his mischievous pop pedigree, and now *Loop The Loop*, issued via his own DEEK imprint, shows he's a modern-day master of curiously English psychedelia. Sanguine and self-deprecating, Jenkins rues life's missed chances as he joins the dots between sparkling synth-funk ("It's No Spirit"), sax-laced sci-fi boogie ("Speed"), mellow exotica ("Health") and so much more. Best of all, Jenkins conveys his obsession with sound beautifully.

PIERS MARTIN



**CHRISTINE AND
THE QUEENS**
Chaleur Humaine
BECAUSE MUSIC

**French torch-pop starlet
makes English-language
bid for greatness**

7/10

When is a reissue not a reissue? When it's an English-language reimagining of a six-times-platinum French release. This expertly wrought debut is an impressive platform for twentysomething polymath Héloïse Letissier. The album's title translates as 'human warmth', and here are 12 superior torch songs, lit by YouTube-breaking art-pop single "Christine". Weimar-ian staging and art-school sensibilities bring serious drama to music that sounds like it is trapped in an alternate 1985, where Talk Talk, David Sylvian and Propaganda's "Duel" are required listening by law. "Jonathan" is great, but "Narcissus Is Back" is exquisite: the offhand desperation that the French do so well.

MARK BENTLEY

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Bullion



➤ By his own admission, Nathan Jenkins is a tinkerer. "I finished my album three times in three years," says the 31-year-old producer behind Bullion's psych-pop curveball *Loop The Loop*. "In the end, Mica from Micachu And The Shapes gave me some sage advice: you have to hate it before you release it. She was right." Luckily, all that extra time in the studio allowed Jenkins' Bullion debut to develop into a rich and strange odyssey through English outsider pop that taps a wealth of influences – John Martyn, Vini Reilly, Jona Lewie, Godley & Creme – to fashion a peculiar kind of neon acid folk that eludes easy categorisation.

As Bullion, Jenkins has struggled to fit in ever since he emerged in 2007 with his astonishing Beach Boys and J Dilla mash-up *Pet Sounds: In The Key Of Dee*, which is still regularly bootlegged on vinyl, though not by him, he adds. After several one-off releases – plus stints programming beats for the likes of Usher – he's settling down with his own label, Deek, and its coterie of "off-key English pop" artists such as Laura Groves and Never. Happiest in the studio, Jenkins will do all he can to keep Bullion from the stage. "It's too daunting," he says. "I'd be a nervous wreck. I'm not a showman."

PIERS MARTIN



DE MONTEVERT
De Monteverdi
NO METHOD

**Delicious debut from
Swedish classically
trained cellist**

7/10

Ellinor Nilsson makes enticing dream-pop that evokes a raft of comparisons, from Mazzy Star and Galaxie 500 to Bat For Lashes and SVIIB, but with a looser, skewed Scandi spontaneity that's entirely her own. Tracks such as the spacy improv of "Close Encounter" and the stark "Home" boast an appealingly raw demo quality, setting up an intriguing juxtaposition with the more arranged, poppier aesthetics of "Summer Heart" and "It's Alright, I'm Probably Dreaming". Singing in English in a voice that sits somewhere between Lisa Gerrard and Kim Deal, her theme is love and betrayal, culminating in the unsettling "Ode To Mental Instability".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**DIMINISHED
MEN**
Vision In Crime
ABDUCTION

**Seattle instrumental
trio's noir-ish fourth**

7/10

The "soundtrack to an invisible movie" genus is now so long established, it's spawned several species of its own. But Diminished Men – who include drummer Dave Abramson, of Master Musicians Of Bukkake – have mutated the form, adding drone, freeform jazz, exotica and gamelan orchestrals to a base of spy/action and spaghetti western scores. *Vision In Crime* frequently pulls away from its prescriptive title, notably with the swaggering "CRM Discriminator", kosmische strut "Shadow Petram" and standout "Kudzu Mine": Miles and Jimi battle John Barry. The opening nuclear-attack siren/spoken-word piece "Preparedness Actions" ("whitewash the windows – this must be done") is a neat red herring.

SHARON O'CONNELL



EL GUINCHO
HiperAsia
EVERLASTING

**Music as wearable
tech from Spanish
hip-pop Svengali**

7/10

The word 'multimedia' doesn't do this justice. Named after a chain of Chinese bazaars in Madrid, this is the third album from vaunted producer and Björk collaborator Pablo Diaz-Reixa, and it's a clashing confection of skittering beats, ultra-processed vocals and rainbow-coloured synths. Accompanying the album is – what else? – a fashion collection of wristbands and sweatshirts embedded with NFC Bluetooth chips, which can "unlock exclusive content" when paired with a smartphone. El Guincho is a kind of Iberian Kanye, and this is a twisted fantasy of wine-bar techno: busy, brash and migrainey, at its adventurous best on "Comix" and "Mis Hits".

MARK BENTLEY

CHRIS FORSYTH AND THE SOLAR MOTEL BAND

The Rarity Of Experience

NO QUARTER

US mavericks' adventurous double. By Michael Bonner



8/10

IT'S POSSIBLE TO tell a lot about an artist not only by the songs they cover, but also the manner in which they choose to perform them. Here, Philadelphia-based guitarist Forsyth closes *The Rarity Of Experience* with a version of Richard

Thompson's "The Calvary Cross". While discreetly respectful to the original, Forsyth maps his own path through the song – a long, winding journey showcasing the formidable clarity of Forsyth's playing. The rest of *The Rarity Of Experience* bristles with similar moments of high drama – expansive jams interwoven with razor-sharp dynamics. This album pushes and pulls in so many directions, it should fall apart; remarkably, it doesn't.

The Rarity Of Experience is the second album Forsyth has recorded with the Solar Motel Band, currently featuring Paul Sukeena (guitar), Peter Kerlin (bass) and Steven Urgo (drums). Their previous record, 2014's *Intensity Ghost*, foregrounded the formidable interplay between Forsyth and Sukeena, whose twin guitars evoke great tag teams passim such as Neil Young and Danny Whitten, Lou Reed and Robert Quine or – most pertinently – Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd. There are changes afoot on *The Rarity Of Experience*. Opener "Anthem I" begins with an oscillating synth line (courtesy of Jamie Fennelly, from Forsyth's previous band, Peeesseye); elsewhere, Forsyth sings.

But the alterations are not just cosmetic. The album's wide-ranging scope is critical. *The Rarity Of Experience* is a double album: most of the material on Disc One has been honed on the road for the past year, while the second disc is more experimental in nature. Forsyth has also re-recorded some tracks from elsewhere in his catalogue that fit in with his current set. Both discs reflect the different aspects of Forsyth: the formidable guitarist with a killer live band, and the improvisatory musician operating on the fringes of space rock and free jazz.

The first three minutes of "Anthem II" are an explosive showcase for the band's strengths. Driven by Urgo's pounding drums and Kerlin's vigorous basslines, the guitars weave and rut, alternately squalling and keening. "The Rarity Of Experience Pt 1" – a compact 2:23, the shortest track here – finds



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Chris Forsyth

Recorded in:

Philadelphia

Personnel: Chris

Forsyth (guitar,

vocals), Paul Sukeena

(guitar), Peter Kerlin

(bass), Steven Urgo

(drums), Shawn Hansen

(keyboards), Daniel

Carter (saxophone,

trumpet), Ryan

Sawyer (percussion),

Jamie Fennelly

(synthesiser)

Forsyth singing in a dryly disaffected voice not unlike Thurston Moore (Moore and Ranaldo are perhaps another comparable pairing to Forsyth and Sukeena). Meanwhile, the descending guitar motif of "... Pt 2", threatens to burst into "Marquee Moon" at a moment's notice. Buttressed by echoey organ stabs from regular collaborator Shawn Hansen, it reveals taut, new-wave rhythms, echoed by Forsyth's minimalistic lyrics: "Think once/ Think twice/ Can't think/ Soul on ice".

The 10-minute "High Castle Rock" never breaks its energy; each part of the song is a conduit to another delirious Forsyth solo or else it simply ploughs on forward, powered by the band's formidable rhythm section. The mic setup on Urgo's drums captures a deep, resonant boom that provides a solid foundation for the febrile playing of the two guitarists. "High Castle Rock" also makes clear the distinctions between Forsyth and Sukeena's playing. Forsyth seems to chisel out each chiming note – he studied guitar with Richard Lloyd in the late 1990s – whereas Sukeena favours tight, spidery scrabbings that occasionally recall

Nels Cline. Disc One finishes with "Harmonious Dance", a looser, more cosmic number that loops round a mellifluous guitar refrain.

Disc Two opens with the outstanding "The First Ten Minutes Of Cocksucker Blues": an imagined alternative score to the beginning of Robert Frank's 1972 Stones doc that pulses with a period-authentic sense of menace. Forsyth originally recorded this on 2012's solo set, *Kenzo Deluxe*; for this version, the band is joined by free jazz player Daniel Carter, whose woozy saxophone and trumpet lines add sinister undercurrents to the song. Elsewhere,

Forsyth's guitar on the down-tempo "Boston Street Lullabye" recalls the sepulchral twang of Low's Alan Sparhawk. Initially favouring some graceful acoustic strumming, "Old Phase" slowly builds itself to full strength as Forsyth and Sukeena's guitar lines spiral and rise with fine fluidity. The album closes with "The Calvary Cross": Thompson's mysterious invocation to his poetic muse. The song's blank verse suits Forsyth's semi-spoken delivery here. But presumably taking his cue from the extended live version included on Thompson's (*guitar/vocal*) album, Forsyth's

Q&A

Chris Forsyth



When did you start working on the album?

The first tracks were recorded in December, 2014. The Richard Thompson cover was the first song that was recorded. A

couple date back to demos or fragments I have from 1995. So I've either been working on it for 20 years or 11 months!

Why a double album?

The idea was to record as much as we could, then see what stuck. The week after we mixed, I listened to it and realised, 'Oh, shit. We made two records.' The way it breaks down is, the first record is the bulk of the live set we've been

playing for the past year in addition to some things from the other records that are like the songs in the repertoire. The second record is some things that were sonically different from what the live band were doing. Then there's the Richard Thompson cover. We played that live a number of times.

Can you talk us through a couple of your favourite tracks?

The first side is the stuff I'm most excited about. People tend to frame everything I do in terms of classic guitar bands – which is fine and not untrue, but I wanted to throw a little curveball. So the first thing you hear is the sequencer going 'wahwahwah', then the band comes crashing in. The title track has got the most singing I've done on anything up to this point. I think the first side has a lot of new areas being explored. But I like all of them!

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



ESSAIE PAS Demain Est Une Autre Nuit

DFA

Montreal electro duo explore 50 shades of monochrome

7/10

Marie Davidson and Pierre Guérineau confect a

Betamax retro-futurist sound that risks straying into pastiche at times, and is all the better for it. Throbbing with monophonic analogue synths, Roland TR-505 beats and sulky French vocals, the duo's second album takes place mostly in a reconstructed early '80s fantasy of kohl-eyed alienation. Thankfully, they rewire this timeless aesthetic with more open-minded affection than stifling reverence. As the siren-powered dancefloor belter "Retox" and the towering synth-noir chanson "La Chute" demonstrate, there is room for both sexy hedonism and baroque melodrama in their hauntological flirtations with the ghosts of electronica's past.

STEPHEN DALTON



EXEC The Limber Real

TAMBOURHINOCEROS

Doleful Danish dirges with an undertow of bleak beauty

7/10

On a break from his day job fronting Danish indie-rockers Veto, singer and

keyboard player Troels Abrahamsen enters a more rarefied realm of emotionally charged esoterica on this solo collection of chamber-folk ballads. Tapping into a tremulous new vocal register that falls somewhere between Antony Hegarty and Scott Walker, Abrahamsen coos traumatised confessionals and oneiric visions over treated piano, drawing on Nordic psalm tradition for doleful dirges like "Hymn" and the strident, key-bashing, sinew-twisting curio "Peers". Though a little sombre and self-serious in places, Exec delivers enough piercing vocal intensity and avant-folk beauty to excuse its sphincter-clenching shrillness.

STEPHEN DALTON



BRIAN FALLON Painkillers

ISLAND

Solid solo debut by Gaslight Anthem frontman

7/10

It is often the case that when a singer

from a reasonably well-known band makes their first solo album, they seize the opportunity to explore horizons denied them by the strictures of their group. That is not remotely what has happened here: little on *Painkillers* would sound misplaced on any given Gaslight Anthem album. Which, if one is predisposed to the band's hearty but thoughtful brand of rock'n'roll, is no bad thing: The tracks "A Wonderful Life" and "Among Other Foolish Things" are especially worthy additions to an already impressive songbook.

ANDREW MUELLER



FERNANDO Leave The Radio On

DÉCOR

Breakout moment for crown prince of Portlandia

8/10

For the past 20 years, Argentina-born

Fernando Viconte has been Portland's best-kept secret, a highly talented singer-songwriter whose admirers include Peter Buck, Steve Wynn and Willy Vlautin. Some of them fetch up on this first European release, Buck joined by fellow REM bandmate Scott McCaughey as well as members of Richmond Fontaine and The Delines. The overriding tone is a pluralistic kind of psychedelic folk that finds room for Tex-Mex, cosmic country and MMJ-ish space-rock. It's all artfully rendered and beautifully paced, not least "No Mercy In July", which sounds like vintage Roy Wood by way of Flaming Lips.

ROB HUGHES

REVELATIONS

Brian Fallon takes an indefinite break from The Gaslight Anthem



► "At this point," asks Brian Fallon, discussing the reasons for striking out under his own name, "why not? It was the one thing I hadn't done and still had the desire to do." Fallon's slight restlessness with The Gaslight Anthem has been apparent for some time, leading him into such side-projects as the whiskey-stained balladry of The Horrible Crowes and the rumbustious Americana of Molly & The Zombies. With The Gaslight Anthem having declared an indefinite hiatus after touring their 2014 album, *Get Hurt*, Fallon was free to be himself.

"If I did another side-project," he says, "I was limited to only working in the realm of the project, which is exactly the reason to do a 'solo' record. I decided that if I brought my side projects under my own name then I could play songs from, and work inside, those worlds all in one place." Fallon selected *Painkillers* as a title because, "I've always looked at music as a sort of consoler and songs as a comfort. It seemed a fitting title with that in mind."

And The Gaslight Anthem?

"Out of the office," he says, "presumed having a good time."

ANDREW MUELLER



JEREMY GARA Limn

NRCSS INDUSTRY

Arcade Fire sticksman conjures off-piste ambience

6/10

Perhaps mindful that drummers from Ringo Starr to Father John Misty

have had a crack at a solo career, Jeremy Gara has pieced together his own album, though commercial viability appears to be the last thing on his mind. This defiantly challenging work features 10 instrumental collages that make the second side of *Low* sound like Black Lace, conjuring up varying shades of ambient dread, from the eerie drift of "Imagined Machines" and "Tangles" (which recalls Sigur Rós side project Riceboy Sleeps) to the industrial turbulence of "Chicago" and "Judgement Dialogue". At its best – the terrific "Violence", the lilting "A New Age" – *Limn* casts a bewitching spell, but it's an unsettling ride.

GRAEME THOMSON



THE HANGING STARS Over The Silvery Lake

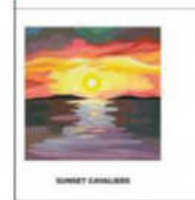
THE GREAT POP SUPPLEMENT/CRIMSON CROW

Country-psych from impressive London debutants

7/10

A promising debut from London's The Hanging Stars, who switch deftly between deliciously sentimental Americana and swaggering psychedelia. The band are equally comfortable in either territory, sounding like the Broken Family Band or Lambchop on "Floodbound" and "The Hanging Stars", songs lent a yearning quality via pedal steel, but also dealing in the Scouse pop of The La's and Boo Radleys on "For A While", "The House On The Hill" and the brilliant "She Never Sleeps". The widescreen "Running Waters Wide", reminiscent of Buffalo Springfield, ends things on an impressively ambitious note.

PETER WATTS



COLIN HARPER Sunset Cavaliers

MARKET SQUARE

Revered music biographer picks up his guitar and rounds up famous friends

6/10

When they interview favourite musicians, some writers ask for an autograph or a plerctum. Biographer Colin Harper's approach is different – he asks his subjects to make music with him. Bert Jansch, Wishbone Ash's Andy Powell, Duffy Power, Chris Spedding and members of Mahavishnu Orchestra all appear on an LP recorded over several years, a loving, mostly instrumental homage to his favourite music from the 1960s and '70s, spanning folk, jazz, rock, blues and Celtic music. Listening to his guitar duet with Jansch on "Blues For A Green Earth", he really can play, too.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



HERON OBLIVION Heron Oblivion SUB POP

San Francisco's new psych-folk supergroup – the Egretful Dead?

7/10

For those who've spent the 21st century exploring the US psychedelic underground, Heron Oblivion is quite the proposition, anchored as it is by members of Comets On Fire and Espers. It's the latter's eldritch vibe that dominates, thanks to the charmingly forlorn vocals of Meg Baird (also on drums). Comets pivot Ethan Miller is on bass, ceding guitar duties to Noel Von Harmonson (Comets, Sic Alps) and Charlie Sauflay (Assemble Head In Sunburst Sound), but the general molten tone is still familiar on the heady likes of "Oriar" and "Rama". Trees might be the best '70s antecedent; the Japanese Ghost a more modern analogue for these seething reveries, tantalisingly poised on the edge of freak-out.

JOHN MULVEY



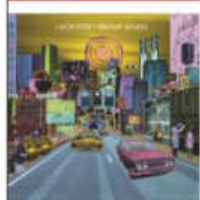
HOLY ESQUE At Hope's Ravine BEYOND THE FREQUENCY

Post-punky Scots scale up on intermittently thrilling debut

7/10

Though this intense young quartet have been building momentum in Glasgow over the past four years, two members hail from The Jesus And Mary Chain's original stamping ground of East Kilbride. It's tempting to emphasize that lineage given how *At Hope's Ravine's* brooding contents evoke *Darklands* if run through Kurt Cobain's guitar pedal on "Come As You Are." Frontman Pat Hynes' desperate howl adds a more distinctive element, as does the stadium-ready heft of early single "Rose" and new standout "Silences". Even if several songs see them veer too close to conventional power-balladry or Joy Division karaoke, Holy Esque are mostly wise to favour the first part of the time-honoured go-big-or-go-home strategy.

JASON ANDERSON



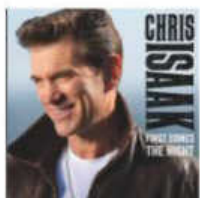
I MONSTER Bright Sparks TWINS OF EVIL

Concept album about synth pioneers, complete with accompanying doc

6/10

Dean Honer and Jarrod Gosling are from a proud lineage of Sheffield synth worshippers stretching all the way back to the Human League and Cabaret Voltaire. *Bright Sparks* is their tribute to the inventors of these mystical machines, with a song devoted to each of the main players – Moog, Chamberlin, EMS, etc – complete with lyrics describing their various eureka moments. Rather than place these sounds in a contemporary techno context, I Monster have opted for a kitschy, retro-futuristic approach that can get a little silly (their rousing, psychedelic Buchla homage is a notable exception). But for a crash course in synth history, it's pretty effective.

SAM RICHARDS



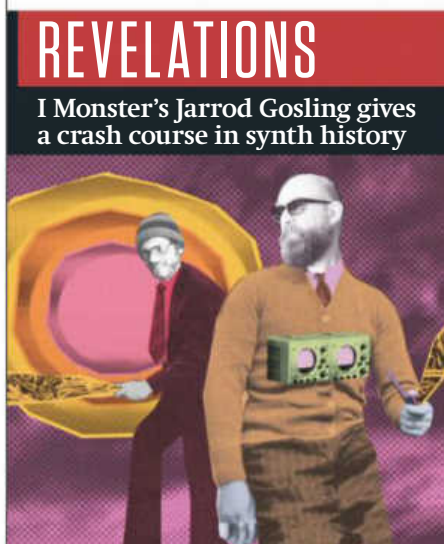
CHRIS ISAAK First Comes The Night RHINO

First album of original material since 2009 from the "Wicked Game" player

7/10

After indulging his inner Elvis on 2011's *Beyond The Sun*, a set of 1950s covers that genuflected at Sam Phillips' Memphis shrine, Isaak returns to the songwriting game with a Nashville-recorded set that is pleasant but unfulfilling. The biggest issue is that his deep, dark-chocolate baritone has gone milky, while some of the songs are distinctly low-calorie. The title track sounds oddly like a Cat Stevens medley, and "Please Don't Call" is the sort of song Calixico would throw away, but "Reverie" and "Kiss Me Like A Stranger" at least hint at the old black magic.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



► What is it about Sheffield and synths? "Maybe because it's a steel-based city," muses local lad Jarrod Gosling of I Monster, who was originally inspired by the bracing bleeps of Warp Records. "But once The Human League and Cabaret Voltaire went with the synth sound, it seemed to get passed down the generations."

I Monster's new album, *Bright Sparks*, is a love-letter to the boffins who established this brave new musical world; each track tells the story of a different synth pioneer, fleshed out with the distinctive sounds of the instrument they created, from Moog to Mellotron. Gosling's favourite to play was the Buchla. "It looks mental. It doesn't have a keyboard, just big metal contact plates that make weird noises. It was invented on the West Coast in the mid-'60s so it became the perfect psychedelic machine." He also has a soft spot for EDP's Wasp synth. Although conceived by a prog-loving descendant of Richard Wagner, "it makes a brutal noise that got used by punk bands."

You can learn more in *Bright Sparks'* accompanying two-hour documentary. Gosling is just itching to get started on Volume 2, featuring Yamaha, Roland and Korg. "That would be nice wouldn't it, going over to Japan..."

SAM RICHARDS



JAMES Girl At The End Of The World BMG

Purposeful and stirring career revival continues for Manchester veterans

7/10

Overseen once more by Max Dingel, producer of 2014's *La Petite Mort*, *Girl At The End Of The World* extends and advances on its predecessor's spirited reboot. Snarled opener "Bitch" sets up Tim Booth's barbed lyrical concerns, while the lusty air of retribution and reflection that permeates tunes calls on the full range of James' firepower – from the galloping "Surfer's Song" to the gloom-laced kiss-off "Dear John". Their urban folk and anthemic rave roots coalesce on the luminous "Attention", while the muscular attack and inventiveness hold good to the righteous spleen of "Waking" and the title track's sweeping finale.

GAVIN MARTIN



JESU/SUN KIL MOON Jesu/Sun Kil Moon CALDO VERDE/ROUGH TRADE

Beauty and reverie mix in this inevitably doom-laden match-up between Mark Kozelek and Justin Broadrick

8/10

With its concrete slabs of riffage and doomy layers of synthesiser, opener "Good Morning My Love" raises fears that Sun Kil Moon's more delicate side may be crushed under the weight of Jesu's avant-metal dirges. But not even this collaboration's most thunderous moments detract from the quieter power of the singer's frank, free-associative lyrics. As is often the case, death is very much on Kozelek's mind and the two most spellbinding songs use the passing of their subjects – Yes bassist Chris Squire in "Fragile" and Nick Cave's son Arthur in "Exodus" – as departure points for wide-ranging ruminations on grief.

JASON ANDERSON



GLENN JONES Fleeting THRILL JOCKEY

Further death chants, breakdowns and avant-folk perambulations

7/10

Unlike most latterday John Fahey disciples, Jones has gruelling real-life experience of the man: 1997's *The Epiphany Of Glenn Jones*, a collaboration between Fahey and Jones' old band Cul De Sac, is fraught testimony to that. Exposure to late-period Fahey did not, however, derail Jones' study of the maestro's American Primitive heyday. *Fleeting*, once again, is a loving, diligent and honest attempt by Jones to pay fingerpicking homage to his hero: "Flower Turned Inside Out", in particular, is a beauty. Explicit nods to Robbie Basho and Michael Chapman also figure, confirming Jones as a brilliant scholar whose technical virtuosity is, fortunately, matched by an emotional intelligence that shines through even his most deferential music.

JOHN MULVEY



MEILYR JONES
2013
MOSHI MOSHI

Welsh meditations inspired by the Eternal City

7/10

Taking cues from Lord Byron and Rome, this

solo album from the former Race Horses singer is a dramatic affair, from the terrific glam stomp and swing of opening track "How To Recognise A Work Of Art" to the arch melodrama of the gorgeous "Passionate Friend". Songs are draped in strings and are sometimes overly winsome, with Jones' Welsh lilt front and centre. At their best – "Return To Life", "Refugees" – these bring together aspects of Super Furry Animals (Jones has played bass in the past for Gruff Rhys' Neon Neon), John Grant, Luke Haines and even a splash of Pulp at their more restrained.

PETER WATTS



DAMIEN JURADO
Visions Of Us On The Land
SECRETLY CANADIAN

A sonic voyage through Americana from the singer-songwriter

8/10

As ever, Damien Jurado's

masterful pastiches serve as sonic comfort food for the average *Uncut* reader. "Lon Bella" is a nod to John Martyn's "Solid Air"; "Prisms" to Linda Perhacs; "Cinco De Tomorrow" and "AM AM" are wistful Roy Orbison epics; the last three tracks are particularly Dylanesque; while the José Feliciano-ish "Mellow Blue Polka Dot" even sees him quoting from his own 2014 single "Silver Timothy". But Jurado's skill is to marshal these references to construct a cinematic road trip through a hidden America, conjuring up images of hippy communes, Indian reservations and freaky preachers. Dreamy, trippy and filled with elegant hooks, it's his best yet.

JOHN LEWIS



KANO
Made In The Manor
PARLOPHONE

East London rapper goes back to his roots Kane Robinson aka Kano's fifth LP comes bathed in nostalgia, paying emotional tribute to friends

7/10

and family and reflecting on life in his native London. While there's nothing here to equal his career-changing hit "P's And Q's", opener "Hail" comes close with its down-and-dirty signature riff and Kano's excellent pronunciation: "This ain't no RP cup-of-tea music/It's real East End theme music." Elsewhere, the nimble "This Is England" recalls his early years partying with fellow rappers Wiley and Lethal Bizzle in the land of "pie and mash". His longtime collaborator Damon Albarn also pops up on the affecting "Deep Blues", on which Kano wearily observes: "Life can get really, really real."

FIONA STURGES



NICHOLAS KRGOVICH
The Hills
TIN ANGEL

Enveloping, sophisticated pop from Canadian indie mainstay

8/10

The Hills completes Nicholas Krgovich's Los Angeles

trilogy; the Vancouver musician released the lavish *On Sunset* in 2014, documenting his experiences as an outsider in the sprawl, and reprised those songs solo on 2015's *On Cahuenga*. The palette of *On Sunset* returns here, equally indebted to Joe Jackson ("The Place Goes Quiet"), Arthur Russell ("Lookout Point") and Jens Lekman ("Mountain Of Song"), but the focus is on intimacy rather than alienation. It's densely layered: nestled around string-heavy interludes are soulful, noirish pop songs with rhythmic vocals and bold counter melodies. As with Ariel Pink's *Before Today*, you'd hope it might become this DIY stalwart's breakthrough moment.

LAURA SNAPES



RAY LAMONTAGNE
Ouroboros
COLUMBIA

Psych-rock curveball on Maine man's sixth It's an unusual narrative that features both working in a shoe

7/10

factory and winning a Grammy, but that's Ray LaMontagne's story. Best known for country-folk pop songs strong on traditional storytelling, the singer, songwriter and guitarist has in fact switched direction several times, most strikingly on 2014's Dan Auerbach-produced *Supernova*. Now, he's hired Jim James, whose spiritual beliefs he seems to share, along with a taste for cosmic rock and psychedelic blues, all of which figure on the compellingly heavy "Hey, No Pressure". "In My Own Way" returns RLM to his Stephen Stills-ish heartland, but his declaration on the lunging "Changing Man" suggests the past is just that.

SHARON O'CONNELL



LÅPSLEY
Long Way Home
XL

XL dilute two of their strongest aces into this weak facsimile Liverpool's Låpsley is the latest face of the hollow electronic British soul

4/10

scene that conveys little sense of its origins. Signed to XL, the producer and singer croons down the middle of the road between two of her significantly more distinctive labelmates, Adele and FKA Twigs. Her debut concerns a profound heartbreak, but rarely do you sense the real pain that underpins these limp ballads and her aggressively mannered delivery. *Long Way Home* occasionally sparks to life: "Operator (He Doesn't Call Me)" is a slice of retro soul that recalls M People, while "Silverlake" gains a hypnotic, lapping momentum. Otherwise, James Blake has a lot to answer for.

LAURA SNAPES



LELAND SUNDRIES
Music For Outcasts
DÉCOR

New York indie rockers' eclectic debut

7/10

There's heaps of wit and melody on this debut from New York's Leland

Sundries, who tie a variety of genres to frontman Nick Loss-Eaton's gravelly voice and smart lyrics. "Studebaker" is the standout, beautiful rambling storytelling that flirts with pop and sounds a little like Silver Jews, something compounded by its follow-up, country weeper "Keys In The Boot". But elsewhere Leland Sundries come on like The Clash as they rip through a warped version of the American songbook, trying out garage rock on "Greyhound From Reno", dirty blues on "Freckle Blues", Springsteen widescreen romanticism on "Stripper From Bensonhurst" and gleeful rockabilly on "Bad Hair Day".

PETER WATTS



KIRAN LEONARD
Grapefruit
MOSHI MOSHI

Second brilliant album from the Saddleworth avant-rock prodigy

8/10

Still just 20 years old, Kiran Leonard is a formidable talent, comparable to

Stephen Malkmus and Dave Longstreth in the way he joyfully deconstructs rock forms and bends language to his own quixotic will. He's as comfortable arranging for string quartet as he is charging through Slint post-rock territory in multi-part epics that teeter on the edge of chaos before galloping off somewhere new. Sometimes words are thrown around for fun ("The nihilists' ballad is the crux of the wraith!") yelps Leonard on "Exeter Services", but sometimes they cut deeply, as on the haunting "Fireplace", sung from the perspective of a man battling insanity as he grieves for his dead wife. Unique and inspiring.

SAM RICHARDS



LORETTA LYNN
Full Circle
LEGACY

Overdue follow-up to Van Lear Rose The decade-plus gap in the discography that has followed

8/10

2004's justly acclaimed Jack White-produced *Van Lear Rose* is forgivable: Lynn will turn 84 in 2016, after all. It's also fair enough that *Full Circle* is something of a victory lap, starting with a revisiting of the first song she ever wrote – "Whispering Sea" – and including several new takes on old country standards, including some of Lynn's own composition ("Fist City", "Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven"). Willie Nelson and Elvis Costello appear as duet partners, affably resigned to not competing with that unmistakable, undimmed voice.

ANDREW MUELLER



THE MAGNETIC NORTH

Prospect Of Skelmersdale

FULL TIME HOBBY

Trio's superb second centres on UK home of Transcendental Meditation

8/10

Their outstanding 2012 debut, *Orkney: Symphony Of The Magnetic North*, focused this multi-tasking threesome's energy and vision around a vivid dream from Erland Cooper's Scottish childhood. Here, drawing on Verve and Gorillaz man Simon Tong's experience growing up in the UK's first TM community, an appropriately meditative mood presides. The trio's captivating blend of archive voiceovers, yearning harmonies and melodic lushness proves as compelling as Hannah Peel's vocal daring, best heard on "Little Jerusalem" and George Harrison cover "Run Of The Mill". The band's status as one of these islands' premier musical psychogeographers is unassailable.

GAVIN MARTIN



LAURA J MARTIN

On The Never Never

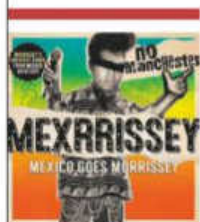
SHAPE

Merseyside prog pixie plays it straight(er)

7/10

After two amiably otherworldly outings, Liverpoolian flute-looper Laura J Martin finds her Care Bear fortress under attack on her third LP. Pieced together in Nashville with bits of Lambchop, Silver Jews and The Jesus Lizard, *On The Never Never* turns its sad-unicorn eyes on the woes of an increasingly homogenised world, but paradoxically is Martin's most conventional offering to date. That said, Slapp Happy samba "Green Grey Grim" and teeth-and-eyes-era Kate Bush oddity "It's A Stumper" might prove distastefully quirky for anyone whose tastes err on the vanilla side of Euros Childs or Cate Le Bon. Fairy dust running low, but much credit due.

JIM WIRTH



MEXRRISSEY

No Manchester

COOKING VINYL

Morrissey gets a mariachi makeover

No matter what he does, the love for Morrissey in Mexico remains undimmed. Mexrrissey

7/10

are by no means the first Hispanic tribute act for Manchester's most famous son, but they're the best by some distance, not least because they don't come with a side order of kitsch. This is the brainchild of Mexican Institute Of Sound's Camilo Lara and Sergio Mendoza, the sometime Calexico keyboardist, and their debut album is a delightful, horn-infused love letter to Morrissey's best solo work. Choice cuts include "Cada Día Es Domingo", a sweetly atmospheric cover of "Everyday Is Like Sunday", and the cowbell-smothered "International Playgirl", in which Morrissey's fading protagonist switches gender.

FIONA STURGES



MIIKE SNOW

iii

ATLANTIC

Swedish/American studio band offer high-class pop without the ego

Having written or produced for Britney, Madonna and Bruno Mars

8/10

among many others, Miike Snow are clearly masters of the modern pop idiom. But their own material is mercifully free of the brashness or faux-humility that big-name stars tend to pack as standard. It means a perky song about a jealous lover comparing himself to Genghis Khan comes across as charmingly arch instead of glib; twinkling electro-ballad "I Feel The Weight" is genuinely wistful; and pop brat Charli XCX's appearance on the glitchy, carnivalesque "For U" feels exuberant rather than tiresomely in-yer-face. A cameo from Run The Jewels is a final treat on an album full of them.

SAM RICHARDS

REVELATIONS

Simon Tong on the "bare bones" of The Magnetic North's new LP



➤ Before finalising the wistful sonic landscapes of their second album, *Prospect Of Skelmersdale*, The Magnetic North abandoned their early recordings; a natural part of the creative process according to Simon Tong, formerly of The Verve, Gorillaz and The Good, The Bad & The Queen. "To destroy something is as important as creating it in the first place," he explains. "It's about getting down to the bare bones of a project, stripping the flesh away until you find the core of the idea."

It was Hannah Peel who first suggested that she, Tong and Erland Cooper focus album number two around Tong's childhood home, a dramatic change from Orkney, the location that inspired their debut. "I moved to Skelmersdale aged 11 because my dad was a Transcendental Meditation practitioner," says Tong, "and he wanted to live in a community of like-minded people. Skelmersdale has no immediate beauty. At first we thought we would end up making a more gnarly, industrial, fucked-up album, but the more we went on, the more the underlying beauty came through."

With Tong currently working on Damon Albarn's *Wonderland* production, Peel an in-demand composer and solo artist, and Cooper performing with his own band The Carnival, time together as The Magnetic North is limited. "It's a complicated triangle," says Tong. "We try not to think how it works. It's like fumbling around in the dark at times and there are frictions, but they are healthy ones. We know where each other's strengths lie, the more we work together."

GAVIN MARTIN



MOTHERS

When You Walk A Long Distance You Are Tired

WICHITA

Art-school grad's poised yet visceral first Athens, GA's Kristine Leschper launched

7/10

Mothers as a solo side-project to her visual arts studies and wrote most of *When You Walk A Long Distance You Are Tired* in her final year. She's self-taught, which might explain the unpredictability of her grungy post-rock and haunting art-folk songs, if not their confident presentation. Leschper meditates on creativity, identity and self-doubt in a voice that's equal parts Angel Olsen and Waxahatchee, while the music – played by a full band – runs the expressive gamut, from a delicate (and painfully honest) "It Hurts Until It Doesn't" to the math-rock churn of "Lockjaw" and a darkly winding "Burden Of Proof".

SHARON O'CONNELL



BOB MOULD

Patch The Sky

MERGE

Mould never sleeps: Sugar daddy still on form

8/10

His best and liveliest record of the millennium, Bob Mould's 2014 outing *Beauty & Ruin* caused a stir – not least since he had clearly got his Hüsker Dü-era flying-V guitar out of storage. Hopes of the hardcore Beatles reforming have been dashed since, but their energy courses through Mould's 11th solo record proper. Bereavements and break-ups overshadowed its conception, but *Patch The Sky* wears its darkness lightly, "Hold On", "Hands Are Tied" and "Losing Time" best exemplifying Mould's brilliant if familiar combination of tears and tinnitus. No other pony does his one trick half as well.

JIM WIRTH



NADA SURF

You Know Who You Are

CITY SLANG

NYC powerpop masters in peak form on eighth LP

8/10

With 20 years under their belts, and former GBV guitarist Doug Gillard fully integrated into the line-up, Nada Surf have their Byrds/Big Star-rooted sound totally locked in, and *You Know Who You Are* is a smart, dynamic effort that breaks some new ground. Framing the record are the surging, anthemic "Cold To See Clear", a showcase for Matthew Caws' boyish, yearning tenor, and the jingle-jangling, harmony-laced "Victory's Yours", one of two sharply drawn Dan Wilson co-writes. The biggest departures are the pummelling "New Bird", the loping, Stones-y "Animal" and the delectable "Gold Sounds", a motorik churning à la Wilco's "Spiders (Kidsmoke)".

BUD SCOPPA



dynamic and versatile singer, he seemed revitalised. The album was the richest and most diverse collection of songs he'd composed to date. The stalwart country rock of so many great

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: John Morgan Askew
Recorded at: Flora Recording And Playback and Scenic Burrows, both Portland, Oregon
Personnel: Willy Vlautin (vocals, guitar), Sean Oldham (drums), Dan Eccles (lead guitar, piano), Dave Harding, John Askew (guitars), Freddy Trujillo (bass), Jenny Conlee-Drizos (keyboards), Paul Brainard (pedal steel, trumpet)

Richmond Fontaine tracks was largely intact, but there were glorious country-soul excursions that Boone essayed with a panache way beyond Vlautin's faltering range.

Talking to *Uncut* when the album came out, Willy was adamant, however, that we hadn't heard the last of Richmond Fontaine, that he'd written a new batch of songs for the band, who were even then rehearsing them. Which brings us to *You Can't Go Back If There's Nothing To Go Back To*, whose release has been preceded by the news that it will be their last. As such, it's a more poignant epitaph to their fine career than the dour and sometimes impenetrable *The High Country*. There's a lot of familiar heartache here on songs like "Wake Up Ray", about a marriage coming desperately apart in a small Montana town; it could be a prequel to the tale of the young wife making

a run for it in "The Oil Rigs At Night", a highlight of *Colfax*. We also immediately recognise the abject runaways of "Three Brothers Rolled Into Town", the flat-broke cowboys of "Whitey And Me", the hell-bent drunks of "Let's Hit One More Place" and the desperate husband of "A Night In The City", whose fevered instrumental climax recalls "4 Walls" from *Thirteen Cities*.

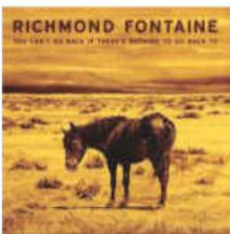
Everyone in these songs is afraid, scared of the pasts that haunt them, fearful of a future that holds nothing but woe, frightened, on the outstanding "Don't Skip Out On Me", of being abandoned, left behind, waking up and finding everyone gone, dead or disappeared, leaving nothing behind apart from an anguished vacancy. Pedal steel, electric guitar and keyboards mesh plaintively here in a forlorn matrix. Elsewhere, there's the feeling that Vlautin's used the opportunity of a final outing with Richmond Fontaine to revisit some of the characters from earlier albums.

"I Can't Black It Out If I Wake Up And Remember" and "I Got Off The Bus", for instance, could be about the dismal loser who lit out for California on *Post To Wire* returning now to a largely derelict hometown he no longer recognises, once-familiar buildings burned down or demolished, the family and friends he left behind all gone, every street full of awful, inhospitable memories. "I know what you abandon dies and what you leave leaves you, too," Vlautin sings on the latter song, a hymn to the lost as good as anything he's ever written.

RICHMOND FONTAINE

You Can't Go Back If There's Nothing To Go Back To DECOR

Americana heroes' poignant valedictory album. *By Allan Jones*



9/10

RICHMOND FONTAINE DID the orphaned Americana thing better than anyone on 2004's *Post To Wire*, an album that visited the unlit places where people end up when they're abandoned and adrift. You'd be inclined to call it a career high if the records that followed weren't just as good. *The Fitzgerald* (2005), *Thirteen Cities* (2007) and *We Used To Think The Freeway Sounded Like A River* (2009) were similarly vivid examples of the brilliantly pared-down storytelling that had become songwriter Willy Vlautin's speciality, his songs across these albums unflinching narratives about the washed-up, lonely and hopeless.

Willy's world in these songs was full of suicidal drunks, beat-up wives, teenage runaways, down-at-heel drifters, degenerate gamblers on endless losing streaks, threadbare hustlers. The kind of people, in other words, who have to check their own pulse from time to time to make sure they're not dead, whose lives or what's left of them have become as stricken as the kind of country songs no-one wants to hear any more because nobody wants to feel that sad.

The band's hot streak only cooled with 2011's *The High Country*, an austere song cycle whose bleak outlook carried with it a hint of finality, the sense that Willy had reached the end of a particular road

with Richmond Fontaine. Willy was a prize-winning novelist by then, his books carrying eye-catching endorsements from George Pelecanos and Donna Tartt. A new career as a full-time writer plausibly beckoned. Instead, Vlautin formed a new band, The Delines, the songs on their 2014 album, *Colfax*, written as a showcase for the terrific voice of Amy Boone, singer with Austin's The Damns. Willy's own frail voice is a limited thing, marvellous on a certain kind of song; writing for a more

Q&A

Willy Vlautin



Why is this Richmond Fontaine's last record?

When [guitarist] Dave Harding moved to Denmark after *The High Country*, we were stopped in our tracks. We were worn out

as well. Dave was gone, we weren't quite a band any more and everyone went their own way. But we didn't want *The High Country* to be our last record. So when we got back together, we tried as hard as we could and we got lucky. We all feel more than great about it, so it seemed like the right place to stop.

It must have been strange knowing that you

were writing your last songs for the band.

I wasn't thinking about that so much at first, but it did sink into the fabric of the songs. A lot of the record is about the age we're at and how a lot of our harder-living friends are beginning to fall apart. We're at the age where you start having to pay for the way you've lived. I was thinking of all that and also the idea of coming home. When you've finished looking around or you fail too many times, you come home.

You also revisit characters from earlier albums.

I think so. The heart of our early songs was in Reno where I grew up. Over the years, the characters in them drifted all over looking for a place to land. Now they're done drifting and coming home. Maybe there's nothing left there, but it's where they started and where they'll end. That also made sense to me in terms of our career. *INTERVIEW: ALLAN JONES*



WILLIE NELSON

Summertime: Willie Nelson Sings Gershwin
SONY LEGACY

The old outlaw rides down the classics

8/10

Nelson first dipped into the Great American Songbook on 1978's *Stardust*, which included a version of "Someone To Watch Over Me". Almost 40 years on, he revisits the song plus 10 other Gershwin greats, his seasoned, mahogany croon tailor-made for such an exercise. His typically idiosyncratic phrasing displays a wonderfully cavalier disregard for conventional balladry as he sings all around the beat. The swinging, jazz-country arrangements are perfect, too, hitching the polished, romantic sophistication of the songs to a down-home, rootsy bonhomie that draws comparison with Dylan's reinterpretations of the Sinatra songbook on 2015's *Shadows In The Night*.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JEB LOY NICHOLS

Ya Smell Me?
CITY COUNTRY CITY

Comely mini-album from Wales-based Midwesterner

7/10

Nothing if not eclectic, Wyoming-born Nichols has made an art of assembling various musical modes – folk, blues, reggae, country, soul – and merrily fashioning his own hybrids, over the course of an itinerant career. This six-track mini-LP builds on the infectious groove of "Countrymusicdisco45" (from 2012 precursor *The Jeb Loy Nichols Special*), with mellow swamp-funk grooves and a pinch of psychedelia. "Regret" boasts a great trumpet line; the smouldering "Pretty Lonesome" sounds akin to a Dr John concoction circa *Gris-Gris*; "My Mistake" eases along like a less stubbly JJ Cale. All of which augurs well for a full-length effort, due sometime in the spring.

ROB HUGHES



EDWARD PENFOLD

Caulkhead
STOLEN BODY

Strange pop-psych from off the English coast

7/10

Although much of *Caulkhead* is founded on a principle of disjointedly, determinedly English, rough-edged psychedelia, like the Syd Barrett-influenced "Up Down" or the melancholically melodic "If You Like", Edward Penfold's avowedly otherworldly qualities also see him deliver gorgeous curios like the thick, plucking instrumental "Hogwash" and the tape-manipulation drone of "PPS". Penfold's deadpan vocals add to the odd atmosphere, with the title track – a caulkhead is a native of the Isle Of Wight, where Penfold was born – sounding like 1950s self-deprecating music hall as imagined by The Kinks and confirming the generally lugubrious quality of this arresting, unusual album.

PETER WATTS



PINKSHINY ULTRABLAST

CLUB AC30

Russian nu-gazers put new shine on vintage fuzz-punk sound

7/10

As the shoegazing revival gathers momentum with Ride, MBV, Slowdive and Lush all active again, Saint Petersburg dream-pop noisniks Pinkshinyultrablaster are already ahead of the curve. Their second album in 12 months is densely layered with drones, shudders and super-heavy effects-pedal dynamics, all adorned with singer Lyubov Soloveva's tinselly vocalese reveries. *Grandfeathered* is no great progression from last year's *Everything Else Matters*, but there is a genre-defying richness and depth to tunes like "I Catch You Napping", which sounds like Sigur Rós wielding a chainsaw made of diamonds, or the title track's melding of fissile effects-pedal crackle with Afropop guitar lines.

STEPHEN DALTON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Edward Penfold



➤ Edward Penfold grew up on the Isle Of Wight, and although he now lives in Bristol, the island still influences his music. *Caulkhead*, his debut, is an LP of dislocated psych-pop with its title taken from the nickname for an Isle Of Wight native.

"The 1970 festival was up the road from where I lived, so my dad would tell me stories of people camping in his garden," says Penfold. "That gave me a sense of pride and certainly turned me on to a lot of good music." Mercury-nominated locals The Bees were another inspiration. "That changed what I thought was possible," he says. "Not only is the nature of how it was recorded inspiring, the songs are great. It takes from dub, tropicália, jazz, psychedelia – it taught me to not feel restricted."

This sense of eclecticism is evident in *Caulkhead*, which was recorded on the island with the help of Bristol acts such as Taos Humm, Factotum, Velcro Hooks and Dom Mitchison. Penfold sings and plays flute, guitar and piano. He works within the framework of pop, but plays with time, both in terms of where he draws influence from and how the song unfolds. If it's disorientating, that's the plan. "I think it's important to steal anything and everything that you find exciting," he says. "Then you throw it all together and hope it becomes confused enough to give the impression of something original." PETER WATTS



POLICA

United Crushers
MOM + POP/
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Minneapolis electro-pop act championed by Jay Z comes into its own

8/10

Though Polica's third outing bears traces of the swirly dream-pop influences that added murk and mystery to 2011's *Give Up The Ghost* and 2013's *Shulamith*, *United Crushers* establishes a more muscular sensibility for the American quartet. Largely shorn of the pitch-shifting and Auto-Tuning tactics she once preferred, Channy Leaneagh's voice takes its rightful place at the forefront of a beefed-up sound that synthesizes '90s trip-hop, '00s DFA-style dance-rock and 21st-century R&B. Yet for all the force of single "Wedding", the post-Portishead balladry of "Lately" and "Kind" may be the best showcase for Leaneagh's considerable gifts.

JASON ANDERSON



ROBERT POLLARD

Of Course You Are
FIRE AMERICA

More pop craftsmanship from the Guided By Voices mainman

7/10

On his 24th solo album, the Guided By Voices man shows that he still knows how to cobble together a sturdy, well-constructed song. He can rock hard if necessary: "Promo Brunette" is a deliciously chaotic sludge-punk belter, while opener "My Daughter Yes She Knows" mixes a Crazy Horse crunch with a Big Star fragility. But, together with producer and multi-instrumentalist Nick Mitchell, Pollard is convincing in any context, from the heart-wrenching Beatles pop of "I Can Illustrate" to the abrupt, REM-like "Little Pigs". Best of all might be "Come And Listen", where Pollard's religious imagery is matched by suitably baroque strings. A true craftsman at his best.

JOHN LEWIS



THE PRETTIOTS

Funs Cool
ROUGH TRADE

Young New York female duo make fetching naughty/cute debut

7/10

With their tuneful, ukulele-spiced, incident-filled vignettes, Kay Kasparhauser and Lulu Landolfi bring hipster spin to their hometown's post-girl group tradition. Kasparhauser specialises in candid, funny confessionals typified by "Boys (That I Dated In High School)". The cavalcade of past and imagined lovers may be easy targets, but with the melodic surety of "Dreamboy" and the hand-slapping clarion calls of the likes of "Stabler", their potshots ring clear and true. Peachy-keen harmonies, pop smarts and salacious detail make a simple but effective combination. The immediate future looks bright.

GAVIN MARTIN



PRIMAL SCREAM
Chaosmosis
IGNITION

The Scream Team turn out a wobbly 11th

Few bands have gone on and off the boil quite so often as Primal Scream, a group whose music sometimes sounds like God's gift, other times a dog's dinner. The title *Chaosmosis* – a book by radical French philosopher Félix Guattari, because of course it is – is perhaps appropriate for a jumbled record that veers from *Screamadelica* nostalgia ("Trippin' On Your Love") to wobbly Bontempi soul ("I Can Change") to hushed acid-folk ("Private Wars") without ever quite finding a sound of its own. It's perhaps most memorable on "Where The Light Gets In", on which Bobby Gillespie and outsider-pop starlet Sky Ferreira duet on a feisty electro-pop tailor-made for pogoing on sticky floors.

LOUIS PATTISON

5/10



QLUSTER
Echtzeit
BUREAU B

Krautrock colossus' endless tinkering

Forty-five years after Cluster's debut, kosmische kingpin Hans-Joachim Roedelius

continues his exploration at the age of 81 in the rebooted form of Qluster, his trio with relative whippersnappers Onnen Bock and Armin Metz (both 41), who've already released five albums of meditative electronics and piano pieces since 2011. The title of *Echtzeit*, their sixth, translates as "real time" and presumably refers to the improvised nature of the material. Comprising shifting layers of ghostly tones and drifting electronics, these 10 numbers unfurl serenely but unremarkably, typified by the ponderous "Auf Der Lichtung". A lack-Qluster addition to the Roedelius catalogue, perhaps, but fascinating in its own way.

PIERS MARTIN

6/10



MAX RICHTER
Sleep Remixes
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

2015's eight-hour epic reworked by Mogwai, Clark and more

Although *Sleep* was the world's best-selling classical release last year,

this Bedford-bred composer's queasily beautiful pieces have always had as much in common with post-rock or electronica as with more traditional forms. The artists here reworking *Sleep* come from those worlds – Mogwai graft beats and arpeggiated synth to the liquid "Path 5", and Clark adds blown-out tones to the same piece. Elsewhere, Jürgen Müller tears "Dream 3" into glitchy loops, while Marconi Union move "Dream 13" into new age pastures. Even at their best, however, these versions feel removed from their source material, the earthbound treatments dragging the delicate *Sleep* blinking into the harsh light of day.

TOM PINNOCK

6/10



RIHANNA
Anti
WESTBURY ROAD/ROC NATION

Dark and dismal, the Bajan singer's eighth is her best yet

Rihanna's 2009 album, *Rated R*, opened with horror movie samples, letting listeners know darkness awaited. Her long-awaited eighth has no signposting, and seems a true reflection of an artist, not a pop cypher. Anti's production is dank, haunted, and offers few singles – "Work" is grimy dancehall laced around an Aphex Twin-like beat – but instead lets the Bajan singer's extraordinary weed-burned voice blaze through romantic desolation ("Desperado"), via a cover of Tame Impala's "Same Old Mistakes" through to a cinematic resolution, with the cheesecakey soul of "Love On The Brain" and the drunk, desirous "Higher". One of the most coherent and surprising big-ticket pop albums in years.

LAURA SNAPES

8/10



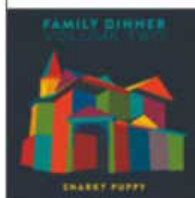
ROBYN SHERWELL
Robyn Sherwell
BIRDLAND

Guernsey singer-songwriter's painstaking and heartfelt debut

Unaffected intimacy is a tricky posture to achieve, but it's one Sherwell attains with easy grace throughout this stylish mission statement. "Pale Lung" is a key example – delicious double-tracked vocals, methodical chord changes accommodating lateral moves and meditative rapture. Producer David Kosten (Bat For Lashes) proves an artful accomplice, with the subtle electro/acoustic instrumentation giving the circular repetition of "Broken" added heft. Whether pivoting around glassy keys ("Tightropes") or a solitary guitar figure ("Portrait"), her elegant tunes evince thoughtfulness and soulfulness in equal measure.

GAVIN MARTIN

7/10



SNARKY PUPPY
Family Dinner Volume Two
GROUND UP MUSIC/
UNIVERSAL

Jazz-fusion collective welcome David Crosby and other vocal guests

As this curious jazz collective from Brooklyn move from an internet cult into an arena-conquering phenomenon, they're attracting big-name guests. The problem is that everything sounds better when Snarky Puppy themselves take a back seat. They barely intrude on David Crosby's lovely "Somebody Home" and keep things simple on Susana Baca's "Molino Molero". Elsewhere, their heady brew overpowers more subtle flavours. Laura Mvula's interesting dialogue with Michelle Willis on harmonium and Appalachian singer Becca Stevens' spartan duet with Swedish folkies Väsen are both suffocated by Snarky Puppy's slightly indigestible brand of funky fusion.

JOHN LEWIS

5/10



ESPERANZA SPALDING
Emily's D+Evolution
CONCORD

Grammy-winning bassist/singer teams up with Tony Visconti for an art-rock statement

The varied works of this Portland-born bassist and singer have suggested a giant talent that spills out of jazz into Brazil, R&B, music theatre and even thrash metal. This semi-autobiographical concept album pushes her deep into art-rock territory – "Judas" and "Noble Nobles" dreamily evoke Joni Mitchell's work with Jaco Pastorius, while "Earth To Heaven" fortifies early '80s Kate Bush. Co-producer Tony Visconti's paw prints are all over the precise, metallic rock of "Good Lava", the ethereal soul of "Rest In Pleasure" and the demented version of Willy Wonka's "I Want It Now", with each recalling a different Bowie era.

JOHN LEWIS

8/10



SPECTRES
Dead
SONIC CATHEDRAL

Power-sander remix for abrasive nu-gazers' debut

A more menacing My Bloody Valentine, North Devon's Spectres made a huge splash in a surprisingly deep sub-genre pond with glowering 2015 debut *Dying*. Not content with having foisted a daunting, grey racket on the world, they invited like-minded souls to "kill our songs" for *Dead*. Thus cosmic Mancunians Hookworms twist "The Sky Of All Places" into a Mary Chain approximation of *Metal Machine Music* and Factory Floor make desiccated disco mincemeat of "Sink", while Loop guru Robert Hampson, Death In Vegas's Richard Fearless, Ride's Andy Bell and Mogwai's Stuart Braithwaite demonstrate the oldies' appetite for deconstruction.

JIM WIRTH

7/10



CARTER TANTON
Jettison The Valley
WESTERN VINYL

Baltimore native goes to England and writes a California song-cycle

Carter Tanton was California dreamin' when he penned the nine songs of this self-made LP; like fellow mid-Atlantic native Jonathan Wilson, Tanton evidences an uncanny command of the canyon/desert milieu, and he's blessed with a voice as pure as Glenn Frey's. Two fetching female voices bring a soft-focus glow to the linchpin songs on this incandescent album, as Sharon Van Etten harmonises on "Twenty-Nine Palms" and "Through The Garden Gates", while Tanton's frequent collaborator Marissa Nadler sings on the title track. But he's achingly alone in the gorgeous "The Long Goodbye", which makes inspired use of the Chandler-cum-Altman classic to recount the final moments of a faded romance.

BUD SCOPPA

8/10



THE CORAL

Distance Inbetween

IGNITION

Hoylake's finest return with their heaviest album yet. *By John Lewis*



8/10

UNTIL THE 1930s, for nearly half a century there was a parliamentary constituency in Liverpool that chose to ignore the prevailing British political trends and returned an Irish Nationalist MP to Westminster. This regional

bloodymindedness has long been a fixture of the city's music scene. When punk hit, Liverpool's hipsters were listening to baritone crooners such as Jim Morrison and Scott Walker; at the height of synth pop, Scousers dug deep into the jangly guitars of 1960s psychedelia. As the 1980s wore on, Merseyside's young football fans were wearing flares and listening to Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa.

The Coral are reluctant to see themselves as a Liverpool band – they're from Hoylake, across the Mersey at the tip of the Wirral – but they seem to embody the sonic otherness of this weird maritime city state. Even when they released their first album in 2002 – as teenagers who still lived with their parents – they were gleefully citing contrary influences such as Nat King Cole, Johnny Mathis and The Four Freshmen to bewildered journalists.

Now, on their first album in six years, their interests in freak folk, doo-wop and skiffle have been replaced by other influences – the sludge rock of Black Sabbath, the trance metal of Hawkwind, the metrical beats of Krautrock. Assisting them in this change is the slightly wayward guitar playing of Paul Molloy, formerly of kindred spirits The Zutons, who joined the band halfway through the LP to replace guitarist Lee Southall, currently on hiatus.

The band have still been active throughout this apparent furlough. In 2014 they quietly released

The Curse Of Love, a “lost” album recorded in 2006, while most of the band have been active in each other's recent solo projects – James Skelly's backing band The Intenders featured most of The Coral at some point, as has The Serpent Power (a project led by drummer Ian Skelly and Molloy).

Distance Inbetween is very much the hardest and heaviest thing that The Coral have ever put down on tape. The opening tracks set out their stall.

“Connector” is a wonderfully hypnotic three-chord groove, based around a machine-like beat and some pitch-shifted Bollywood strings. “White Bird” is tremendous – an insistent, pulsating Motown-meets-Krautrock beat topped by spooky Mellotrons and wobbly guitars.

The band have always been good on imaginative vocal harmonies, orchestrated by bassist Paul Duffy, and this album is no exception. On “White Bird”, or the drumless folk-style song “She Runs The River”, or the one-chord boogie of “Million Eyes”, the harmonies initially sound like Crosby, Stills & Nash or America, but start to become slightly sinister, using the kind of intervals you associate with Gregorian chants. And even on the more meat-

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Richard

Turvey and The Coral

Recorded at:

Parr Street Studios, Liverpool

Personnel includes:

James Skelly (vocals, rhythm guitar), Paul Duffy (bass), Nick Power (keyboards), Ian Skelly (drums), Paul Molloy (lead guitar)

and-potatoes heavy boogie numbers – the bubblegum freakbeat of “Holy Revelation”, the 12-bar stomp of “Fear Machine – the drums sound *fantastic* – wild and thunderous, yet also tight and hypnotic.

As you'd imagine, the band still hit some of those Liverpudlian touchstones. “Chasing The Tail Of A Dream” is a sped-up ringer for Pink Floyd's “Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun”, based around the same

pounding tom-tom gallop. That Scouse love of baritone crooners is never far – on the dreamy, piano-led title track, James Skelly's croon strays into Scott Walker territory; among the woozy organs and grungy guitars of “It's You”, he could be Jim Morrison. “Miss Fortune”, meanwhile, sounds like a potted history of Merseybeat – a Teardrops-ish motorik beat, a Bunnymen-like melody and a terrific backwards “Taxman” guitar solo from Molloy.

On paper, stripped back to its constituent elements, it sounds somewhat derivative, an exercise in retro box-ticking. But the garbled way in which The Coral piece these disparate elements together creates an odd, timeless and cosmic music, buzzing with energy, and very much their own.

Q&A

James Skelly



How much do you see yourself as part of any Liverpool sound?

Well, when we started we were definitely influenced by stuff like the Bunnymen and Shack. But we're kinda halfway between Liverpool and Wales – you can pretty much see the Welsh coast from Hoylake. And a big part of us was just as influenced by Welsh bands like Gorky's and Super Furry Animals.

Is analogue recording important to you?

We're not fetishistic about it at all. When it's a really busy recording, with loads of layers of instruments, digital recording is way better. But, for this album, we really wanted that soggy drum sound you get on tape. Digital can be a bit dry, but we wanted the drums to really bleed and soak into everything else.

The harmonies are weirder than usual here...

Yeah, they sound quite complicated but often they're much simpler than our usual harmonies – often we're just singing the root note and maybe a fifth. It's a bit medieval, innit? Like those medieval beards some of us have been trying out lately, ha ha. Actually, I had an album of Gregorian plainsong as a teenager. Maybe that's rubbed off.

What influenced the change in direction?

Well, we were listening to stuff like Can and Hawkwind and Black Sabbath. But our influences are less about music; more about other stuff. Richard Yates' books, particularly *Revolutionary Road*, Alan Moore comics, and this amazing American photographer called Gregory Crewdson, who does these really beautifully lit pictures of mundane streets. A lot of the lyrics are influenced by *Mad Men* – the way you've got something very straight on the surface that's actually very dark. I love how someone like Ian Curtis is able to be both domestic and apocalyptic, all at once. *INTERVIEW BY JOHN LEWIS*



TELEGRAM

Operator

GRAMGRAM

Cult Anglo-Welsh upstarts' winklepicker glam debut

Skinny, handsome and usually dressed in black, Telegram's retro jams

7/10

sound as archaic as their name. That they've called their debut *Operator* suggests they've twigg'd this, and to their credit the quartet's swaggering garage rock, stuffed with grit and glam, has a certain edge, largely due to frontman Mark Saunders' Welsh-accented sneer (the rest of the band are from London). His raucous delivery and vibrant harmonies propel the tremendous opening batch of "Rule Number One", "Follow" and "Inside Out" beyond the indie landfill, and who knows, the boisterous "Taffy Come Home" – about a light-fingered runaway – could become Saunders' Caerphilly-crafted terrace chant.

PIERS MARTIN



THAO & THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN

A Man Alive

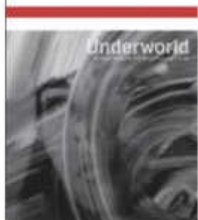
DOMINO

The father-daughter relationship artfully dissected

8/10

The San Francisco singer-songwriter Thao Nguyen doesn't pull any punches while tackling familial relationships on her fourth album. If she doesn't quite reach the foul-mouthed fury of Martha Wainwright's "Bloody Mother Fucking Asshole", this is nonetheless a visceral, candid and thrillingly propulsive depiction of her efforts to work through her father's abandonment when she was a child. She does this via an engaging stew of sounds, from the heartbreaking soul of "Guts" ("You know I'm so easy to find/You won't come get your girl") and the syncopated synth-pop of "Departure" to the laconic indie chug of "Nobody Dies". Terrific stuff.

FIONA STURGES



UNDERWORLD

Barbara Barbara, We Face A Shining Future

UNDERWORLDLIVE.COM/
CAROLINE

Techno vets' best since 1999's *Beaucoup Fish*

7/10

After a sequence of rather underwhelming albums, Underworld's soundtrack for the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony evidently revitalised these grantees of UK techno. It's taken another four years, though, for them to artfully rechannel that energy into a new record. *Barbara Barbara...* makes explicit the band's influence, as well as their core strengths. "Low Burn", discreet and martially relentless, could sit beside younger noiseniks Fuck Buttons or Underworld's own *Dubnobasswithmyheadman*, while "If Rah" echoes early LCD Soundsystem – a reminder that Karl Hyde, in bug-eyed stream-of-consciousness mode, may be the missing link between Mark E Smith and James Murphy.

JOHN MULVEY



VARIOUS ARTISTS

George Fest: A Night To Celebrate The Music Of George Harrison

HOT RECORDS LTD/VAGRANT

7/10

Three-hour, 26-song ode to the Quiet Beatle

This 2CD+DVD document of a September 2014 tribute show is faithful to the source material and occasionally inspired. Showstoppers include an electrifying "Wah Wah" from Strokes guitarist Nick Valensi with Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum; Black Rebel Motorcycle Club's Radiohead-like take on "Art Of Dying"; Brian Wilson's solemn "My Sweet Lord"; and a disarming "Handle With Care" with Brandon Flowers, Wayne Coyne, Britt Daniel, "Weird Al" Yankovic and Big Black Delta's Jonathan Bates. Co-producer Dhani Harrison's uncanny vocal and physical resemblance to his dad brings both gravitas and elation to the proceedings.

BUD SCOPPA



REVELATIONS

Waco Brother Jon Langford talks Small Faces and late-capitalism

► "We've always been a very straightforward, Friday-night rock'n'roll band," notes leader Jon Langford, discussing the Waco Brothers in the light of their new record, *Going Down In History*. "This album was recorded in about half an hour, with little or no preparation, and I must say it's much easier to summon up the rebel spirit under those conditions."

A roaring, levitating, soul-ripping cover of the Small Faces' "All Or Nothing", sung by Dean Schlabowske and dedicated to Ian McLagan, demonstrates the Wacos' undying affection for the group. "I would text him [McLagan]," says Langford, Welsh founder of The Mekons and now long based in Chicago, "and ask how he was doing, and he would say things like 'I'm shitting in tall grass!' or 'First round's on me.' We miss him very much. Dean sings the hell out of this, because he obviously identifies with the protagonist."

"Had About Enough", meanwhile, is the nexus, the group taking on the world's, economic, political and cultural tensions in a two-and-a-half minute frenzy worthy of The Clash, circa '77. "In the pressure cooker of late-capitalism," Langford surmises, "I believe we're all on a hair-trigger and desperate measures will need to be taken."

LUKE TORN



VENETIAN SNARES

Traditional Synthesizer Music

TIMESIG/PLANET MU

Breakcore pioneer going modular and melancholy

8/10

Aaron Funk's

productions as Venetian Snares often court freneticism, sometimes at the cost of poetics. He's a great producer, and his breakcore and drill'n'bass sides are thrilling and full of invective, but there's another side to Funk, a melancholic melodicist shielded by the brittle brutality. On *Traditional Synthesizer Music*, an album of real-time improvisations on a modular synth, he lets the patch bay weep, even as the rhythms stutter and collide. The result, particularly on beautiful tunes like "Everything About You Is Special", is one of his most engrossing albums yet, a gorgeously unsettling collection of itchy electronics.

JONDALE



JOE VOLK

Happenings And Killings

GLITTERHOUSE

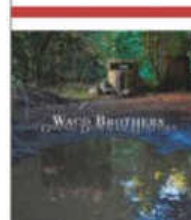
Austere alt.folk with Portishead connections

6/10

Recently relocated from Bristol to Switzerland, folk-noir singer-songwriter

Joe Volk retains his long association with Portishead and their musical family on this new solo album. Geoff Barrow and Adrian Utley both had a hand in the production of *Happenings And Killings*, which mostly couches Volk's husky falsetto sighs in fingerpicking bedsit guitar, light-touch electronics, doleful woodwind and minimal harmonica. He may be a little too fond of tastefully sombre ruminations, but Volk comes alive on more expansive tracks like "These Feathers Count" and "The Thief Of Ideas", which cloak Bert Jansch-level acoustic austerity in jazzy syncopation and spooked droning reminiscent of Radiohead. Or, indeed, Portishead.

STEPHEN DALTON



WACO BROTHERS

Going Down In History

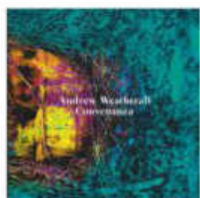
BLOODSHOT

Sometime Mekon Jon Langford's never-say-die quintet, in full-attack mode

8/10

The Waco Brothers' first album of originals since 2005's *Freedom And Weep* is a blistering testament to social sagacity, political pointedness and artistic perseverance. A soaring, Ian McLagan-dedicated Small Faces cover, "All Or Nothing", is the spiritual centrepiece of the set, but every song arrives with crisp melodies, burning guitars and impassioned vocals. "Receiver" is a hard look at a society held prisoner by technology; the title track nips hard at time's dictates. The best track, however, comes late, with the crackling "Had Enough" channelling the spirit of Joe Strummer.

LUKE TORN



ANDREW WEATHERALL

Convenanza

ROTTERS GOLF CLUB

7/10

A wild ride into the heart of guerrilla dub-funk
Andrew Weatherall gets more attention for his role as a cultural catalyst:

understandably so, given his best-known music is often his remixes (Primal Scream, My Bloody Valentine, Saint Etienne). However, this obscures the body of music he's made himself, with groups such as Two Lone Swordsman and Sabres Of Paradise, or recently, with *Convenanza* collaborator Nina Walsh. *Convenanza* is only Weatherall's second album, but it feels as if he's been making this fantastic, moody music all his life – dub effects trail, smoke-like, across the stereo spectrum; post-punk and agit-funk rhythms sleaze from the speakers; Weatherall drawls over tar-blackened guitar-noise.

JON DALE



WHITE DENIM

Stiff

DOWNTOWN

8/10

Texan kings of record-collector ramalam triumph again

A 50 per cent switch in personnel (guitarist Austin Jenkins and drummer

Joshua Block having left to capitalise on their work with soulman Leon Bridges) doesn't appear to have much affected the runaway momentum of White Denim. Like its predecessor, 2013's *Corsicana Lemonade*, *Stiff* flirts with mainstream etiquette – Ethan Johns produces – before resorting to the sort of hyperdriven, math-tinged choogles that have served the band so well over six albums. The Allmans and the Minutemen remain touchstones, but there are new influences thrown into the mix: the high-tensile funk-rock of "Ha Ha Ha Ha (Yeah)"; or "Real Deal Momma", roughly "Last Train To Clarksville" reimagined by the Sir Douglas Quintet.

JOHN MULVEY



WILD NOTHING

Life Of Pause

BELLA UNION

8/10

Jack Tatum trades dreaminess for drive on Wild Nothing's third album

With its cheeky repurposing of the

polyrhythms favoured by the American composer for whom it's named, *Life Of Pause*'s opener, "Reichpop", is a bold indication of Jack Tatum's widening ambitions for Wild Nothing. Whereas his 2010 debut, *Gemini*, was steeped in the chill-wave and dream-pop aesthetic then prevalent among US indie upstarts, *Life Of Pause* demonstrates a more playful and propulsive approach. There's no lack of reverb-drenched reveries, but new songs like "Japanese Alice", on which Tatum divides his Creation-ist sympathies between "Christine" and "Feed Me With Your Kiss", benefit from a greater sense of forward momentum.

JASON ANDERSON



JEFF WOOTTON

The Way The Light

SYMPATHY FOR VINYL

7/10

21st-century psychedelia from Manchester over-achiever

After five years touring with Gorillaz and collaborating with the likes of Massive Attack, Noel Gallagher and Can's Damo Suzuki, this twentysomething multi-instrumentalist has struck out on his own with an impressive first album. Given Wootton's varied CV, it's little wonder that *The Way The Light* plays stylistic hopscotch, from the lolloping baggy groove of "Venus" and the stoner electronica of "Sonic Drips" to the keening semi-acoustic folk of "So Lonely". While the album has its longueurs – "The End" is truly never-ending – Wootton's musicianship here is inarguable and his ambition quite dizzying.

FIONA STURGES

REVELATIONS

Nina Walsh on her collaboration with Andrew Weatherall



► "Is it actually possible to control chaos?", Nina Walsh reflects, as we're discussing the working methods she's developed with long-term collaborator Andrew Weatherall. "I prefer to think that we embrace chaos and see where it leads us."

Walsh is an integral part of Weatherall's new album, *Convenanza*, though it seems the dividing lines between their various projects are increasingly fluid. "It started with a drone left over from recording the Michael Smith project," she recalls, connecting *Convenanza* with the *Unreal City* book and album set from 2013. "Andrew laid down a vocal idea, I added a guitar part, pressed the red button and the following year saw *Convenanza* form."

The pair have also recently found time to work together on the properly hauntological Woodleigh Research Facility, whose *The Phoenix Suburb (And Other Stories)* was one of 2015's sleeper gems: "[It] came about from Andrew and I noodling around on various machines, hunting through lost archives and excavating abandoned tape experiments, digitising them and reassembling the sounds."

While Walsh's current run with Weatherall suggests she's a natural collaborator, it shouldn't overshadow her solo music, including underrated electronica project C-Pij, and 2009's beautifully eclectic *Bright Lights & Filthy Nights*. "When the time is right, no doubt I will record another one," she concludes. "It took me 10 years to get *Bright Lights & Filthy Nights* out, though, so don't hold your breath!"

JON DALE



YETI LANE

L'Aurore

SONIC CATHEDRAL

7/10

Spirited psychedelic investigation from Parisian psych duo

While Yeti Lane derive their name from a conflation of Amon Düül

II's Krautrock meisterwerk *Yeti* and The Beatles' "Penny Lane", it's certainly easier to hear the influence of the former in their voluminous white-outs. *L'Aurore* finds Cédric Benyoucef and Charlie Boyer pursuing a rawer, more improvisatory approach than on albums prior, a questing nature that leads them from the bereft desert blues of "Délicat" to the rugged stoner chug of "Crystal Sky". Actual songcraft can take a back seat, though, Benyoucef's wan vocals on "Good Word's Gone" feeling like a mere canvas over which gnarly guitar and whooshing analogue synth erupt with volcanic potency.

LOUIS PATTISON



PETE YORN

Arranging Time

CAPITOL

8/10

LA-based New Jersey native finally breaks the first-album curse

Since releasing his definitive debut album, *music for the morning after*,

in 2001, Pete Yorn has alternated between trying to top that cult classic and escape its shadow. Yorn's sixth LP comprises a dozen collaborations with players/producers he's worked with over the past 15 years. Current touring drummer Scott Seiver helms three tracks, including the weightless yet dense opener, "Summer Was A Day", while original producer R Walt Vincent reappears on the churning "In Your Head", the agitated stomper "Screaming At The Setting Sun", the culminating "This Fire" and three others. The gambit works: *Arranging Time* functions as both a means of closure and a creative reboot.

BUD SCOPPA



YUCK

Stranger Things

MAME

7/10

Tender and tuneful third from London neo-grungers

In a sense, it feels a bit rich to call Yuck '90s revivalists, given that

their blend of candied tunefulness and scuzzy guitar distortion has been an evergreen sound since Dinosaur Jr stalked the earth. If their third album doesn't exactly do anything new in the field, it is undoubtedly well observed. They kick off breathless and clattery, with the one-two punch of "Hold Me Closer" and "Cannonball" (not the Breeders song, but not a million miles from The Breeders either). But it's not long until they settle into their preferred sound, a languidly tuneful guitar-pop that recalls Yo La Tengo ("Swirling", "As I Walk Away") and, on the title track, Teenage Fanclub at their most wistful.

LOUIS PATTISON

M WARD

More Rain

BELLA UNION

Swinging, sweetly affecting eighth, with added vocal punch.

By Sharon O'Connell



8/10

M WARD'S CV is almost as heavy on the high-profile hook-ups as it is the solo recordings. He's released seven of those since 1999, alongside one Monsters Of Folk album and five with Zoëy Deschanel as She & Him. In addition, there are countless

guest appearances for the likes of Bright Eyes, My Morning Jacket, Jenny Lewis and Howe Gelb, plus production credits for Lewis, Carlos Forster and, most recently, Mavis Staples' *Live It Up*.

Small wonder, then, that the Portland-based singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist is viewed as much in the light of his collaborations as his independent albums. But his MO is hardly that of a driven spotlight seeker; you get the impression that if he's noticed at all, Ward doesn't give a damn.

The man certainly gets around, but there's been a commonality in his choices since the rickety and down-home, dust-covered alt.country of his solo debut, *Duet For Guitars #2*. It's hard to avoid the word "nostalgic" in regard to the warmly intimate and over-easy, Americana/folk pop that has become his trademark, but he's no dogmatic revivalist. Ward's skill is to make what might otherwise seem slight – as She & Him's sugary retroism sometimes does – play as effortless, self-conscious charm.

Despite the title, *More Rain* is framed as a shelter from the troubled world, a place where uplift and contentment reign, and naïveté is embraced. It's telling that Ward plays his yesteryear references – jive, doo-wop, gospel, rock'n'roll, honky tonk – pretty straight. And lyrically, there isn't a single knowing wink, not even on the swinging, barroom gospel of "I'm Going Higher", where he croons, "*Lift me high, so that I can see the dark shine beyond my darkest day.*" The lack of ironic twist is both slightly unsettling and hugely refreshing.

Vocals figure more strongly on *More Rain* than usual, in that Ward's familiar laid-back tone gets a more expressive workout (the winding "Slow Driving Man" and Cali-Mex reminiscence "Girl From Conejo Valley" are standouts on that score) and backing singers help shape the songs, rather than just fill out spaces. As Ward told *Uncut*: "The idea was to rely on voice and vocal harmonies the way street singers used their voices – vocals as horns and strings, etc. The record grew from there and I replaced some vocal parts with actual instruments, but that's the backbone of the record. I normally rely on guitars to make all the drama."

Without abandoning his favourite decade, on *More Rain* Ward winds back from 2012's '60s-focused *A Wasteland Companion* to the '50s, and lets rip a little, with guests including Peter Buck, KD Lang, Neko Case and The Secret Sisters. It's a brief (12 tracks in under 40 minutes) encapsulation of a particular worldview, all unabashed romanticism and guileless honesty, impeccably produced and pitched so up-close and personal that on "Phenomenon" you can hear Ward's wet mouth on the mic. It opens with the rumble of a (simulated) storm and the sound of rain, out of which emerges "Pirate Dial", a sweetly



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: M Ward

Recorded at: Type Foundry and Blue Rooms, Portland, Oregon; ARC Studios, Omaha, Nebraska

Personnel: M Ward (guitars, vocals, piano, keys, mandolin), Mike Coykendall, Joey Spampinato, Scott McCaughey (bass), Scott McPherson, Mark Powers (drums, perc), Mike Mogis (pedal steel, Moog, mandolin), Peter Buck (guitar, mandolin), Paul Brainard (trumpet, pedal steel), Nathaniel Walcott (flugelhorn), Neko Case, KD Lang, Susan Sanchez, The Secret Sisters (backing vocals)

spangled mix of acoustic guitar and pedal steel ostensibly about trawling the frequencies, although something in Ward's "*I can hear ya*" suggests communication of a deeper kind is on his mind. Next is "Time Won't Wait Up"; it cuts some rug via a mix of soda-shop jive, doo-wop and glam, into which Ward slyly drops the hook from "Get It On". It seems he shelved his original plan for an exclusively doo-wop set, but there are more than residual traces. "I'm Listening (Child's Theme)" splices it with country-soul languor and adds strings and flugelhorn, while "Little Baby", featuring KD Lang, is almost a homage to The Drifters. Elsewhere, there are nods to Elvis and

Bobby Darin, notes of mariachi, Moog, mandolin and of Buck's Rickenbacker, while the extended list of band members reads like a who's who of Americana and alt.country/folk veterans.

Ward likes his cover versions. He's previously recorded songs by Buddy Holly, Tony Martin, Bowie (his reworking of "Let's Dance" is a revelatory gem) and Daniel Johnston, but here, it's his beloved Beach Boys. "You're So Good To Me" opens with the words "*You're kinda small*" and features a cheesily attenuated "*lalalalala*", but Ward's in no way laughing at the song – he's a little in love with it. It's that affection that makes *More Rain* hard to resist.

Q&A

M Ward

How is *More Rain* your refuge from a troubled America? Music has always been a refuge or escape for me – listening to it or making it. US culture is sick and getting sicker, but art can help.

The title isn't just an environmental reference. It comes from reading the *New York Times* front-page stories every day. "More rain" is another way of saying more bad news, but it's meant only to be a backdrop for the record. I'm more interested in the ways people transcend it. That's what every good story ever written has been about, from *Hamlet* to *The Hobbit*.

What did Peter Buck et al bring? I'm lucky to have very talented musician friends; they are the

rain and sun that make songs and records grow. I love recording their first instincts in the studio, because you normally get something unexpected that ends up becoming my favourite part of the song.

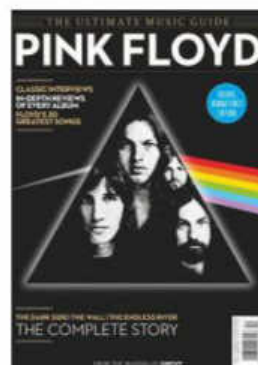
What do you like about '50s rock'n'roll? A lot of it is a waste of time signifying nothing, but a very small amount of digging uncovers an obscure James Brown or Chuck Berry song that quickly becomes essential to living.

"Phenomenon" seems to be about self-belief. Part of the reason this is an especially hard song to talk about is that it's a song about things that are hard to talk about.

How do you keep cynicism at bay? I guess I'm pretty bored with cynicism. Besides a few Pavement records, has it ever achieved anything good? *INTERVIEW: SHARON O'CONNELL*

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SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

1 Poor!

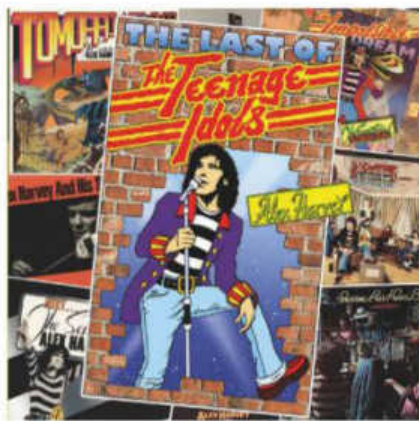
SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrappings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



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Alex Harvey And His Soul Band 1963-1964

DISC TWO:

Alex Harvey And His Soul Band - 2nd Album 1964

DISC THREE:

Alex Harvey - The Blues 1964-1965

DISC FOUR:

Alex Harvey - Solo/
Roman Wall Blues 1966-1969

DISC FIVE:

Rock Workshop/Hair Rave Up/Rock Workshop
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Rock Drill 1977

DISC FOURTEEN:

Solo/The New Band 1978-1983



JANET MACOSKA

ALEX HARVEY

The Last Of The Teenage Idols

UNIVERSAL

Fourteen-disc retrospective for Glasgow's favourite son.

By Alastair McKay

8/10 THERE ARE MANY Alex Harveys and there is only one. There is the acerbic performer whose career was killed by punk, but whose reputation now places him as one of the godfathers of the genre. There is the hippy who spent years in the pit band of the musical *Hair*, and discussed space and UFOs with David Bowie. There is the performer whose sense of

dramatic menace inspired both Lulu and Nick Cave, prompting Lulu to record "Shout!" and Cave to essay "The Hammer Song". And there is the young Alex Harvey, who shared a bill with The Beatles, won a competition to tour as "Scotland's Tommy Steele", and learned his chops in Hamburg. That's without mentioning his time in a blues-influenced soul-revue band, or his album for K-Tel investigating the Loch Ness Monster.

Harvey's singular career, as uneven as it was, can be seen as an alternative





SAHB live with Chris Glen (left) and Zal Cleminson, 1975



Harvey with his Soul Band, 1964



Harvey live in the '60s

→ history of rock'n'roll. To the uninitiated, it boils down to the couple of hits he had with The Sensational Alex Harvey Band. In 1975, SAHB reached No 7 in the UK charts with their rambunctious cover of "Delilah", a murder ballad which had been a hit for Tom Jones seven years earlier. In 1976, they scored their only other chart success with "Boston Tea Party"; a rather peculiar celebration of the American bicentennial which unspooled over Ted McKenna's military drumbeat.

There is a lot more to Harvey's talent than that, obviously. And over 14 discs, starting in Hamburg and ending – more or less – on the shores of Loch Ness, the fulcrum of his career shifts, and the bizarre theatricality of SAHB is thrown into a new light. The band were not, as it

sometimes appears, a warped version of glam, even though Harvey was happy to throw his lungs at Alice Cooper's "School's Out" and The Osmonds' "Crazy Horses" (a curious choice, though the song fits with

Harvey's oft-stated ecological maxim: "Don't pish in the water supply"). They were, instead, an endlessly adaptable group of musicians, schooled in Harvey's eclecticism, and able to shelter in whatever musical shadows Harvey was throwing. Certainly,

they were loud, and it's true that some of their prog stylings now sound dated, but SAHB were as adaptable as Harvey was unpredictable. That also made them a marketing nightmare, and their studio albums struggled to capture

"We are not so much violent as an act of violence," said Harvey. "We go close to the edge"

the power of their live performance, where Harvey's imagination, fired by comic books and *Cabaret*, came to life in swaggering theatrical songs such as "Vambo" – a pulp celebration of Harvey's Glasgow adolescence, with a Santa Claus/Captain Marvel superhero – and "The Tomahawk Kid" in which Harvey rebooted Robert Louis Stevenson.

The key is *Hair*. Examine the music Harvey made before and after, and it's clear that his time in the pit band of the West End show was

an apprenticeship. Before *Hair*, he is trying to interpret genres, albeit with considerable panache. The three tracks recorded in Hamburg with his brother Leslie in 1963 are extraordinary, the stand-out being a sparse attack on the traditional "Lord Randall". Similarly, Harvey's recordings with his Soul Band demonstrate the power of that voice, whether he's taking a self-mocking run at "The Riddle Song" or clambering playfully

SENSATIONAL! FOUR DEEP CUTS FROM THE BOX

ALEX HARVEY AND LESLIE HARVEY 1963 LORD RANDALL

Recorded in Hamburg in May 1963, a quite extraordinary reading of the traditional Borders ballad, with Harvey's brother Leslie shaking the life out his guitar while Alex croons melliflously about "a cup of cold poison, mother, oh". It's a maudlin composition, but delivered with such emotional clarity that you wonder why Harvey didn't make greater use of the folk canon.

ALEX HARVEY 1974 ALEX HARVEY TALKS ABOUT EVERYTHING

From a promo disc sent to American radio

stations in 1974, it features a reflective Harvey explaining the thinking behind *The Impossible Dream* album, and the discipline required to be in SAHB. "I wanted a band that was a unit," he says. "We've got to sit and think like one man." He talks about moulding the band Tear Gas "into something more direct and penetrating and more simple".

THE SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY BAND 1977 NO COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT

Included on a few early copies of *Rock Drill* before being replaced by "Mrs Blackhouse" (a country and western attack on Mary Whitehouse), this

plaintive ballad is one of the great lost Harvey songs. The lyric alludes to the death in a plane crash of Harvey's manager Bill Fehilly, and of his brother Leslie (electrocuted onstage while playing with Stone The Crows).

ALEX HARVEY DEMO, UNDATED BILLY BOLERO

A sparse home demo of a lovely western ballad, previously glimpsed in a bootleg video of Harvey playing in Vienna with The Electric Cowboys. In the video, Harvey introduces the song by saying he wrote it for Clint Eastwood. When the audience laughs, he retorts, "I'm no fuckin' jokin'!" If Clint doesn't want it, Willie Nelson should borrow it.

over “Big Rock Candy Mountain”. By 1969, Harvey is getting playful. “Harp” (which appears in demo and complete form here) adds music to a poem by Czech writer Miroslav Holub, and has a faint whiff of The Velvet Underground.

And then comes *Hair*. It's not the songs he recorded for the show itself, but what follows. In the aftermath, Harvey is bigger, bolder, an exaggerated version of his already exaggerated self. The voice is louder, and loaded with more Glaswegian menace. He is no longer just a band leader. He's a one-man musical theatre.

Live, the effect is multiplied. On the five songs from a 1972 *BBC In Concert*, the band's playing is heavier and harder, and Harvey's command of the stage is absolute. But he's still happy to subvert expectations, following the heightened drama of “Framed” (a Leiber and Stoller composition, first recorded by The Robins in 1954) with the woozy, barroom sing-along “There's No Lights On The Christmas Tree Mother (They're Burning Big Louie Tonight)”.

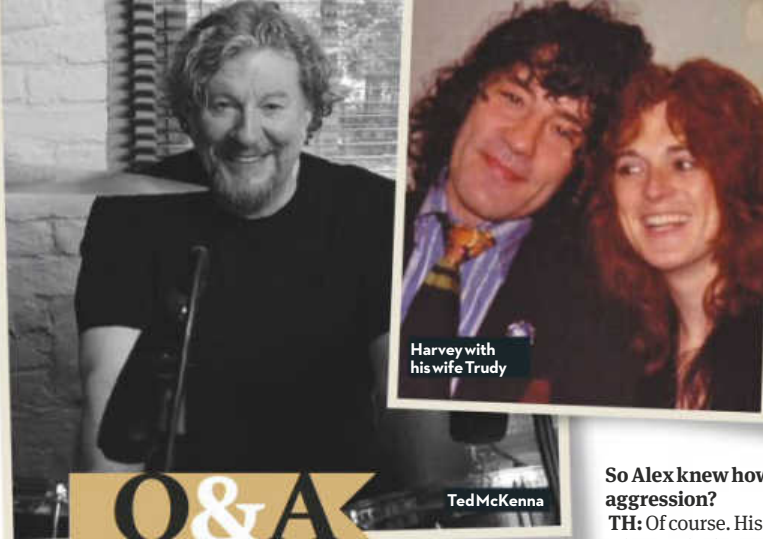
SAHB's career was distorted somewhat by a quest for a hit single, with their management reassuring them that once they had a hit, they would be free to explore their creativity. Instead, the hit became a millstone. After “Delilah”, there was a demand for more of the same, and while the 1976 album *The Penthouse Tapes* showcases the band's eclecticism, there is a sense that Harvey was beginning to regress into his earlier persona as the leader of a show band. SAHB's final album, *Rock Drill* (1977), is underrated, and if it doesn't quite answer the challenge of punk, it does show that they were still capable of musical renewal. The rhythmic “Booids” is an interpretation of ancient Persian military music. Not exactly new wave, but startling in its way.

That wasn't the end, but the curtain was falling. Harvey quit SAHB during rehearsals for a make-or-break tour, forming The New Band, whose album *The Mafia Stole My Guitar* emerged in 1979. It's often overlooked, but the closing track, “Just A Gigolo/I Ain't Got Nobody”, finds him exploring his inner Louis Armstrong to good effect.

Commercially, there was no going back. Harvey's career was at a low ebb when he died in January 1982, the day before his 47th birthday. He was tired and disillusioned, and in an era when record sales mattered more than live performance, had never quite earned his due rewards. Still, he knew what he was doing. In a 24-minute spoken-word piece (originally sent out to US radio stations with *The Impossible Dream*), Harvey muses on his upbringing and his band's purpose. “We are not so much violent as an act of violence,” he says. “We go close to the edge. I am the director and we're making a movie every night. And we're playing the soundtrack at the same time.”

He talks about the need for intensity. Then he confesses that he's really an actor rather than a singer, “although it's still the truth”.

EXTRAS: A 60-page hardcover book featuring 8/10 essays, previously unseen personal photos, documents and newspaper cuttings.



Q&A

Trudy Harvey (Alex's widow) and Ted McKenna (SAHB drummer)

I SIT TRUE David Bowie used to visit Alex at your flat in Hampstead?

TRUDY HARVEY: David had had some success with music, but he was an unknown and he used to come and sit with us, and sleep on the floor and he came to see me when I was in hospital and had my son. At that time he was playing songs with mime artist Lindsay Kemp.

I heard Alex and Bowie used to loll around talking about UFOs.

TH: Yes, it's true enough. They talked a lot about space. Alex recommended that David read Arthur C Clarke's *Childhood's End*. So yes it was absolutely that atmosphere of... flying saucers. It was in the middle of the hippy era. Alex was an avid reader. He was always interested in politics. He would read science fiction. He read people like William Burroughs – the American writing of that era.

You were living by Hampstead Heath. Did you and Alex go for walks?

TH: Yes we did. Also, there used to be a newspaper called *International Times*. And there was something in it that said, “Come to Hampstead Heath to join Yoko Ono, and learn how to catch” – wait for it – “an imaginary butterfly”. That was the era. I can't remember if we caught any butterflies. To my recall, we didn't. But someone was handing out sardines in tins. Feeding the 5,000 or something. Yoko Ono wasn't even known then. It sounds so crazy when I think about it now.

Alex had a hardman image, but he was a pacifist. Was that a contradiction?

TH: Certainly he had to be a criminal or a hard nut to sing “Framed”. But he was a pacifist absolutely. However, he was fascinated by the British Empire, the military. He collected little lead soldiers and repaired them. It was a paradox. That's not to say he didn't get angry sometimes. He was human. He didn't get into fights. I've never known him get into a fight. That's a myth.

TED MCKENNA: He had a very definite attitude about warfare and guns and aggression – mainly because he'd studied it.

So Alex knew how to channel aggression?

TH: Of course. His experience told him what worked. He'd been in the Soul

Band and he'd spent five years in *Hair*: sitting on the stage he watched how the American directors focused the audience's attention. That and all these other experiences of being in Hamburg. Right at the start of the Sensational Alex Harvey Band, he said: “They're going to either love us or hate us,” and he said, “We're going to get them all.” For him it was either Yes or No.

TM: We supported Slade, who were the biggest live band in the country, but we went on as if we were the top band. They didn't like us and they used to throw stuff at us. So Alex eventually got a water pistol – I won't tell you what was in it – and he stood at the front of the stage, so when they spat or threw paper cups he would just squirt them. Wherever we went our attitude was: we're the greatest band in the world. You won't forget us.

Alex's career followed the development of rock'n'roll.

TM: God yeah. All of that mix of emotions and influences came out through the band. It was full of contradictions. One minute we were trying to do Persian music or Jacques Brel's “Next” or Edith Piaf's “Heaven Have Mercy”. Then he'd want to do Hank Williams, or “Irene Goodnight” or “Gambling Barroom Blues”. One of the great luxuries of the band was that there wasn't anything he could come up with that we wouldn't fancy having a go at, whether it was a tango or a waltz, or “Cheek To Cheek”. And then going to see *Cabaret* and seeing that horrific, moving scene where the young boys are singing “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”... chilling. We did it in Germany – Alex was fearless. He used to do “Framed” as a gangster, and then he did it as Hitler, and then he did it as Christ.

What was his particular talent?

TH: He was driven. He did want to tell people: look after yourself, look after your world, don't piss in the water supply. Don't buy any bullets, make any bullets or fire any bullets. I think he wanted to be a kind of

messenger of something new. In a way, he was a kind of revolutionary.

TM: Alex's fascination for man's inhumanity to man was balanced by him saying he'd rather have a Fender Strat than an AK-47, because you'd reach more people. He said if you play “Peggy Sue” by Buddy Holly, people are going to love that and they're going to live. That was his philosophy.

INTERVIEWS: ALASTAIR MCKAY

“He was driven. He did want to tell people: look after yourself, look after your world”

Worthshot:
The Black
Canyon Gang



TRACKLIST

- 1 **Jimmy Carter And Dallas County Green** Travelin'
- 2 **Mistress Mary** And I Didn't Want You
- 3 **Plain Jane** You Can't Make It Alone
- 4 **Dan Pavlides** Lily Of The Valley
- 5 **Angel Oak** I Saw Her Cry
- 6 **Kathy Heidiman** Sleep A Million Years
- 7 **Deerfield** Me Lovin' You
- 8 **Arrogance** To See Her Smile
- 9 **Jeff Cowell** Not Down This Low
- 10 **Kenny Knight** Baby's Back
- 11 **The Black Canyon Gang** Lonesome City
- 12 **Allan Wachs** Mountain Roads
- 13 **Mike And Pam Martin** Lonely Entertainer
- 14 **Bill Madison** Buffalo Skinners
- 15 **White Cloud** All Cried Out
- 16 **Ethel-Ann Powell** Gentle One
- 17 **Sandy Harless** I Knew Her Well
- 18 **FJ McMahon** Spirit Of The Golden Juice
- 19 **Doug Firebaugh** Alabama Railroad Town

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Wayfaring Strangers: Cosmic American Music

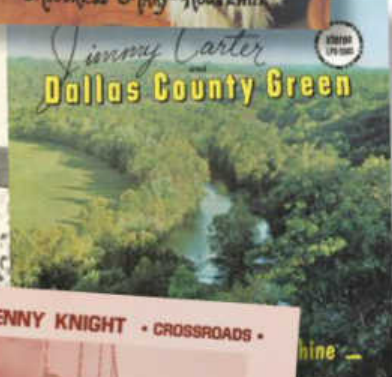
NUMERO GROUP

Farther along... The lost outriders of Americana, rediscovered. *By John Mulvey*

8/10 RECENTLY, *UNCUT*'s Jason Anderson filed a feature on the culture of reissue labels, and their quest to discover music of quality that has remained lost and unheard, even at this late date. In the piece, which we're planning to run in the next issue, one of the fervid and articulate record-hunters interviewed by Anderson was Ken Shipley, from the Chicago imprint Numero Group. Asked about the myth of

crate-diggers finding these gems in record shops, Shipley was dismissive. "That's just some fantasy shit that the media wants to portray of people on their stomachs crawling around on basement floors," he told Anderson. "The reality is all the best records are in people's houses. And really, the best stuff right now is stuff that's undiscovered and people never even knew existed."

It is sometimes hard to countenance that this



American Music, the latest volume, is perhaps the strongest yet, evidence of how an adventurous idea of roots-rock permeated every level of the country's music business in the 1970s. The Eagles may have been finessing frontier tropes for a mainstream rock audience, and becoming America's biggest band in the process, but at the same time, Chapel Hill's Arrogance were struggling to be heard beyond their immediate environs – even though the strafed honky-tonk of “To See Her Smile”

was every bit the equal of the songs released by their Hollywood contemporaries.

“To See Her Smile”’s excellence is endemic of *Cosmic American Music*, and a good indication of how straitened circumstances and general obscurity did not mean that the records collected here sound remotely amateurish. There's a fluency and craftsmanship consistently on show, far removed from any assumptions about naïve art or outsider music – not least when Clarence White, prototyping his and Gene Parsons’

Stringbender gadget, adds plaintive steel effects to Mistress Mary's ambling “And I Didn't Want You”.

At least one member of Arrogance, Don Dixon, ended up playing a critical part in the ongoing development of the sound, co-producing REM's *Murmur* and *Reckoning* with Mitch Easter. White Cloud, meanwhile, harboured two key players: Eric Weissberg, who essayed “Duelling Banjos” on the *Deliverance* soundtrack; and frontman Thomas Jefferson Kaye, who would produce Gene Clark's *No Other*. White Cloud's “All Cried Out” is a small classic of country-soul, at once lush and distraught, and a useful reminder that Kaye's fantastic, self-titled solo album from 1973 itself languishes mystifyingly out of print.

Keen students of the genre will recognise a couple more *Cosmic American Music* contributors from other recent reissues, notably Colorado ex-Marine Kenny Knight: his louche chugger, “Baby's Back”, resurfaced with its 1980 parent album, *Crossroads*, on the Paradise

Of Bachelors label a year ago. The outstanding FJ McMahon, likewise, has had his Fred Neil-ish *Spirit Of The Golden Juice*, dating from 1969, in circulation via Rev-Ola since 2009. Bill Madison, whose “Buffalo Skinners” could plausibly be the work of Bert Jansch circa *LA Turnaround*, apparently saw his *Sunday Mornin' Hayride* (1973) slipped back out on Yoga around the same time.

Those artists, thus far, are the lucky ones. Explaining the competitive ethos of the reissues business, Ken Shipley told Jason Anderson that “You gotta keep this shit super-tight,” and as a consequence it's hard to know whether, for instance, the rest of Sandy Harless' *Songs* is a match for the delicately Gene Clarkish “I Knew Her Well”. Harless' bad luck is twofold. First, he paid for the recording of *Songs* from the profits of his “27-tank fish-breeding business”, only to be ripped off by a sham record label. Second, his faint online profile is overshadowed today by that of a female singer sharing the same name. The second Sandy Harless is a strenuously Christian proselytiser: her vision of cosmic American music may not, one suspects, be quite the same thing at all.

“best stuff” genuinely exists. Surely, it's more likely that rare records are now being rediscovered and repromoted due to a fetishisation of obscurity, rather than as a celebration of excellence? The Numero Group's ongoing series of *Wayfaring Strangers* compilations eloquently suggests otherwise, bearing witness to the fact that great tranches of valuable music are still out there, having been hidden at the back of remote American attics for the past 40-odd years. The focus of *Wayfaring Strangers* is on private-press records – releases on indie labels that were often little more than personal vanity projects. Copies would rarely number more than a few hundred. Distribution would mostly be limited to the artists' neighbourhood and nearby towns. Ambitions would, almost without exception, be stymied.

Still, the post-Joni women collected on the *Ladies From The Canyon* edition of *Wayfaring Strangers* (2006), and the American Primitives who fill the *Guitar Soli* set (2008), suggest a rich hinterland of music-makers: briefly transcendent; ultimately thwarted. *Cosmic*



THE ABYSSINIANS The Clinch Singles Collection

Box of seven restored vinyl singles from JA roots harmony trio

7/10

In 1969, Bernard Collins and Donald Manning entered

Clement Dodd's Studio One compound and, backed by a team of expert players, recorded “Satta Amassa Gana” – a gorgeous Rastafarian hymn inspired by the pair's study of Amharic, an ancient Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia. That a figure as savvy as Dodd would pass on releasing the record that would later become The Abyssinians' debut single indicates how distinct the group's music was from prevailing dancehall trends. Instead, The Abyssinians – completed by Donald's brother Linford – issued the track on their own Clinch Records. It's reproduced here, along with six other vinyl singles that chart the trio's path through the 1970s, a decade in which roots reggae itself became a force on the island. At their best, The Abyssinians attained a unique synthesis of sweetness and heaviness: 1974's Bunny Tom Tom-produced “Prophesy” sets Collins' lamentful vocal about gang violence against a hard militant bounce, and is spun out as a ghostly dub on the Channel One mixing desk for the B-side. “Love Comes And Goes”, meanwhile, puts talk of Jah on hold for a gentle paean to romantic longing that shows the trio's harmonies at their best. A nice, if pricey, package.

EXTRAS: Seven-inch box with sleeves, 8/10 spindle adaptor, sheet of notes.

LOUIS PATTISON



KARL BARTOS Communication (reissue, 2003)

TROCADERO

Former Kraftwerk percussionist's debut solo album, remastered

8/10

When, in 1975, Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider

decided to assemble an extended Kraftwerk lineup to bring *Autobahn* to the stage, they were directed towards a young percussionist at Düsseldorf's Robert Schumann Konservatorium named Karl Bartos. Bartos would become a crucial cog in the Kraftwerk machine – he beat out the unmistakable rhythm to “Numbers” – and remained with the group until 1990, when he left frustrated by Hütter and Schneider's perfectionism. In the decade that followed, Bartos recorded as Elektrik Music and collaborated with Sumner/Marr's Electronic, before finally dropping his own solo album, *Communication* – its reception scuppered, with exquisite timing, by Kraftwerk's own long-delayed return with *Tour De France Soundtracks*. Shame, as *Communication* is rather good: a sort of *Computer World 2.0* that dwells on the nature of our newly connected planet. Bartos doesn't quite have the eye for a concept of his former employers, a musing on celebrity culture titled “15 Minutes Of Fame” falling slightly flat. But “I'm The Message” and “Reality” are suitably body-moving, while “Life” – a hymn to seizing the day – finds him dropping the Vocoder and singing eerily like a Teutonic Bernard Sumner.

EXTRAS: Previously unreleased track 4/10 “Camera Obscura”.

LOUIS PATTISON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



MILK'N'COOKIES

Milk 'n' Cookies (reissue, 1975)

CAPTURED TRACKS

Before their career crumbled: NYC upstarts' unsung debut

Ushered in by The Velvet Underground and intensified by the New York Dolls, the NYC rock underground in the early 1970s was a bubbling cauldron, about to explode in a dozen different directions. As the decade wore on, CBGB opened and punk arrived, it did, bringing the world such wildly diverse talents as the Ramones, Television, Blondie and Talking Heads.

Milk 'n' Cookies, already bar-scene upstarts by 1973, arguably influenced them all. But timing is everything in such a high-

stakes pressure cooker, and within the Cookies' weird story the quintet's timing was all wrong exactly when it seemed to be just right. Hit producer Muff Winwood came calling, inserting Roxy Music bassist Sal Maida into the lineup, and whisking them to London to record their Island debut. A series of misunderstandings and record company manoeuvres later, the band was dropped, and the record slipped out two years later as an afterthought, essentially shredding – reversing even – their once cutting-edge reputation. Milk 'n' Cookies' moment vanished.

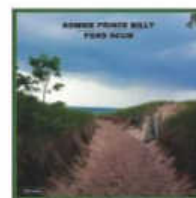
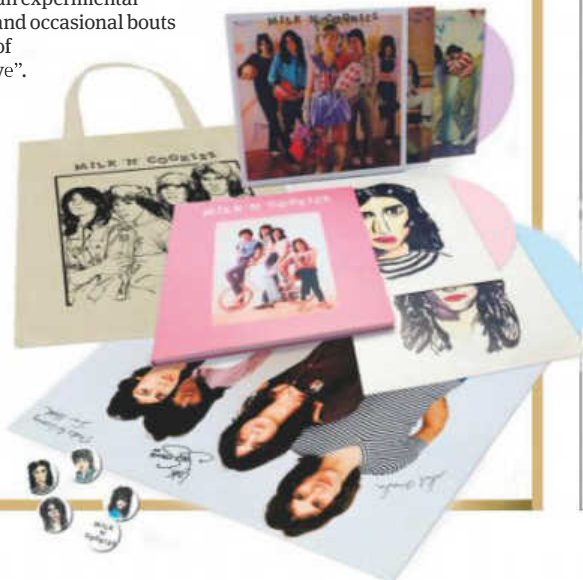
That ill-fated LP, a curious few would eventually learn, is grand, ahead of its time, a brash, genre-bending testament to the effervescence of youth. The group gleefully anticipated punk, dancing upon every nonconformist theme roiling through glam-drenched 1974: the Raspberries' sturdy, melody-based pop; the Dolls' hard-driving, sexually ambivalent rock 'n' roll; T.Rex's sly irony; plus David Bowie, Sparks and others, wrapping it all in a bubblegum sheen.

Singer Justin Strauss led the fray. A fascinating tangle of contradictions, he was poised yet impetuous, fey yet audacious, naïve yet knowing, with an edgy, theatrical, sexually ambiguous air. Songwriter Ian North, later a solo artist, answers Strauss' persona with enveloping keyboard flourishes and snaking guitars. They had an experimental edge, too, with some odd time signatures and occasional bouts of minimalism – see the stop-start stutter of their most risqué track, “Rabbits Make Love”.

At their most gripping, though, Milk 'n' Cookies penned pulsing guitar-pop anthems about impulsiveness, sex and youth: “Little Lost And Innocent”, “Not Enough Girls In The World” and “Just A Kid” all peer into that ephemeral moment when life feels wide open.

This special edition immaculately rights the band's sad narrative, adding 20 unheard tracks, including a pugnacious 1976 demo that both confirms Winwood's original instincts and hints at their would-be evolution. A 120-page hardbound book treats the group with a reverence denied them in their prime.

LUKE TORN



BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY

Pond Scum

DOMINO

Will Oldham's John Peel Sessions – or half of them – revisited

7/10

As a general rule, Oldham has always

seemed more interested in reworking his past than anthologising it: hence the new versions of old songs that filled albums such as *Sings Greatest Palace Music* (2004), and *Singer's Grave A Sea Of Tongues* (2014), which shared nine of its 11 tracks with 2011's *Wolfroy Goes To Town*. *Pond Scum*, however, is an archive project, albeit one delivered with all the caginess we expect from this most capricious of singer-songwriters. Notionally, it's a compilation of the sessions Oldham recorded for John Peel between 1993 and 2002. But only three of those six figure, in reverse order, and one song from 2001 has gone astray (“Rich Wife Full Of Happiness”, released as a download in January). Four songs from 2002, with Arbouretum's Dave Heumann on guitar and piano, are most rewarding, not least a radical rearrangement of “Death To Everyone”. The earliest set, from 1994 and the Palace years, is a reminder of Oldham's uncanny formative work: American folk's imp of the perverse, wayward of voice. The raw sound echoes the contemporaneous *Days In The Wake*, but the songs are different, including *Pond Scum*'s one cover: a take on “The Cross” that replaces Prince's widescreen awe with intimate, revelatory dread.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN MULVEY



JEFF BUCKLEY

You And I

COLUMBIA/LEGACY RECORDINGS

Lost early recordings from hallowed singer-songwriter

6/10

The songs on *You And I*

were the late Jeff Buckley's first recorded tracks for Columbia. Unearthed in the Sony Music archives while the label was putting together a 20th-anniversary package for his *Grace* album, they were recorded in February 1993 at producer Steve Addabbo's Shelter Island Sound studio, but they never saw the light of day. It's covers that make up the bulk of the songs, and some are more successful than others. The opening version of Dylan's “Just Like A Woman”, set against the simplest guitar-picking, is knife-through-the-heart wonderful. So too is “Poor Boy Long Way From Home”, a traditional blues song popularised by Bukka White, in which Buckley ditches his signature vibrato and his voice takes on a rare graininess. Less successful is his take on The Smiths' “The Boy With The Thorn In His Side”, a song that doesn't lend itself to his vocal gymnastics, plus a shrieking cover of “Everyday People”, which takes Sly & The Family Stone's original and removes all trace of joy. Perhaps the finest moment here is an early version of “Grace”, which would become the title track of his only studio LP, and on which his self-assurance as a newly signed artist is quite electrifying.

EXTRAS: None.

FIONA STURGES



WILLIAM BURROUGHS *Call Me Burroughs* (reissue, 1965) SUPERIOR VIADUCT

Beats in show:
Burroughs reads,
naked and alone
Discussing beat author

8/10

William Burroughs' unique presence, and his peculiar impact on popular culture, Laurie Anderson once said, "He was relentless and never stopped talking, and just said things that hadn't been said ever. It woke me up, woke a lot of people up." While it's easy to reduce Burroughs to a set of tedious clichés – junk, cut-ups, queer, controversy – spend any amount of time with his work and you quickly realise that Burroughs was always pointing outwards, moving the form forward, finding unexpected and abstract connections, fusing the body to the word in surprising ways, hot-wiring the heart and mind in new conjunctions. *Call Me Burroughs* is the first album he released of his readings, encouraged by Gaît Frogé of the English Bookshop in Paris, and also by close collaborator Brion Gysin, who advised which sections of *Nova Express* and *The Naked Lunch* Burroughs should read. It's still startling to hear his crackling, ornery drawl, denuded, without the tape cut-ups Burroughs typically used when experimenting with audio. The white heat of his scorched earth, post-surrealist poetics is still hard to beat: Burroughs was less an author than a mediated nervous system, on 24/7 alert.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



CLEAR LIGHT *Clear Light* (reissue, 1967) ACE/BIG BEAT

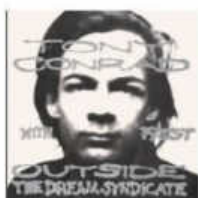
The West Coast sound doubles down; early psychsters' story revealed, plus eight bonus tracks

8/10

Spinning out from the successes of The Byrds, The Doors and Tim Buckley, Clear Light were sophisticated, ambitious, explosive; and, as it turned out, the odd band out, crumbling, hitless, out of the gate. Produced in 1967 by Paul Rothchild, on his high horse in the wake of The Doors' breakthrough, and fronted by singer-turned-actor Cliff DeYoung, they bridged folk into jazz, pop and classical into instrumental jam-fests – a progenitor of prog. Unlike their heroes Love, though, their capacity for melodic, enveloping hooks was less prominent, more ephemeral. This set collects their one Elektra LP, the punky "Brain Train" single, and five strong, developmental, folk-rockish demos, highlighted by the frantic, *Nuggets*-y "She's Ready To Be Free". A whiff of theatricality permeates their approach – they recast Tom Paxton's "Mr Blue" into a six-minute-plus take on paranoia – and jazzy, unpredictable time changes and a rare dual-drummer lineup were other calling cards. Still, Clear Light, ironically, most impress when they keep things simple: the melancholy-slash-restlessness of lead single "Black Roses", and guitarist Bob Seal's "With All In Mind", a churning rocker that flows out as the rousing hit single it should have been.

EXTRAS: Bonus tracks.

6/10 LUKE TORN



TONY CONRAD WITH FAUST *Outside The Dream Syndicate* (reissue, 1973) SUPERIOR VIADUCT

A minimalist monolith, back in print
It could easily be

9/10

considered an afterthought or a sidenote in Faust's career. A travelling experimental filmmaker, with a history of making music in the New York avant-garde, drops by the Faust commune in Wümme to record an album under the guiding hand of Uwe Nettelbeck, the presiding aesthetic of which seems to be: play half, then play less. The filmmaker in question, though, was Tony Conrad, who'd spent the 1960s performing high-volume, fiercely mainlined minimalism with John Cale, LaMonte Young and Marian Zazeela in The Theatre Of Eternal Music, and who was one of the key figures in the constellation surrounding Andy Warhol and The Velvet Underground. It was a combination sure to produce sparks, though the overriding fascination of *Outside The Dream Syndicate*, recorded across three days in 1972, is just how disciplined it is: Conrad's violin reels out a deathly, rattlesnake drone across the two 27-minute sides of the record, while on Side One, the Faust rhythm section relentlessly thud away at a one-note anti-groove; on Side Two, "The Side Of The Machine", Faust are more active, but it's all relative. The result: rock and the avant-garde as natural bedfellows.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE

HOW TO BUY... FAUST COLLABORATIONS From warped pop to drone attacks

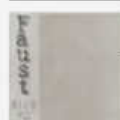


SLAPP HAPPY *Sort Of* POLYDOR, 1972

Faust recorded two albums with Slapp Happy – this was the only one released at the time. The

rubbery pulse of Faust's rhythm section – Peron and Zappi – is strangely perfect for the bucolic art-rock of Blegvad, Krause and Moore. Features "Blue Flower", Slapp Happy's finest pop moment, later covered by Mazzy Star and Pale Saints.

9/10



FAUST *Rien* TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS, 1994

Returning after over a decade's silence, Rien was '70s Faust as reconstructed from recordings of

'90s Faust by producer Jim O'Rourke. A hugely satisfying document – guest appearances by Michael Morley, of The Dead C, and Keiji Haino fold into the one-mind beautifully.

8/10



FAUST/NWW *Disconnected*

ART-ERRORIST, 2007

With Steven Stapleton of Nurse

With Wound a longtime Krautrock booster, the collaboration between NWW and Faust had to happen. "Lass Mich" drags cut-ups out of Faust's monotone rock throb; "Disconnected" cleaves to the dronal anarchy at the heart of NWW's sound world.

8/10

JONDALE



FLYING SAUCER ATTACK *Distance/ Further/Chorus* (reissues, 1994, '95, '95) DOMINO

Home taping is reinventing music

8/10

A duo for a period before continuing as a solo project, recently back after a 15-year hiatus, the history of Bristol's Flying Saucer Attack is hazy. That's only appropriate, perhaps, for an act known for creating – what, exactly? Scuzzy dreampop? Folk-tinged noise rock? English kosmische? Their own phrase, 'rural psychedelia', seems as good as any to describe these three records: defiantly lo-fi, feedback-soaked, never quite in focus. Two of these three re-releases, 1994's *Distance* and the following year's *Chorus*, are compilations, but they cohere convincingly; *Further*, from the same period, is their 'proper' second album and perhaps the finest of the three, although clear highlights elsewhere include "November Mist" (*Distance*) and "Beach Red Lullaby" (*Chorus*). Rather than single tracks, though, it is a case of prolonged submersion in the FSA soundworld: a swirling collision of AR Kane, Richard Youngs, Syd Barrett and Popol Vuh (namechecked on *Chorus*). Alongside acts such as Crescent, Third Eye Foundation and Movietone, FSA were part of a '90s Bristol scene spoken of less than so-called trip-hop but, in an underground sense, also highly influential: Jim O'Rourke, cLOUDDEAD and the Dead C are among their apparent fans. *New Lands* (1997) is to be reissued later this year.

EXTRAS: None.

MARCUS O'DAIR



VOLKER KRIEGL *House-Boat* (reissue, 1978) ABSOLUTE MARKETING

Proggy Germany jazz-rock session from 1978
By the late '70s, US jazz-rock seemed to have run

7/10

out of steam. After clumsily flirting with disco and merging into muzak, American musicians were starting to jettison all notions of fusion and reverting to the comfort zones of bebop. However, in Europe – and particularly in West Germany – the freedoms of electric jazz were still being explored with enthusiasm, and this 1978 session sees the partnership of guitarist Volker Kriegel and vibraphone virtuoso Wolfgang Schlüter exploring areas that few Stateside jazzers wanted to go. There are some slightly clumsy funky moments on *House-Boat*, with Evert Fraterman's drums buried deep in the mix on the title track and on the quirky "Achterbahn", but the best tracks here are largely drumless. The textures on numbers such as "Are You Really Living Next To Me?" and "In Your Way" recall Steely Dan's roughly contemporaneous *Aja*, while the folksier "See The Changes" and "Your Face, Your Voice" are pitched somewhere between Tim Buckley and John Martyn. Throughout, Kriegel's slinky, sitar-influenced improvisations blend seamlessly with Schlüter's four-mallet vibes and marimba. Even the tracks that move into "smooth jazz" territory – like the weightless "Chateau Sentimental" – sound fresh and cliché-free.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



LOVE

Reel To Real
(reissue, 1975)

HIGH MOON

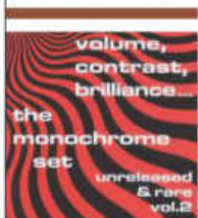
Arthur Lee's underrated funk-rock effort, ripe for reappraisal

8/10

The last proper Love album has been poorly treated by history. While casual listeners were warned off Arthur Lee's erratic post-'60s output and fans obsessed over its 'lost' predecessor *Black Beauty* (which finally gained an official release in 2013), *Reel To Real* remained hidden in plain sight behind a hideous pastel sleeve. It features the same all-black band assembled for *Black Beauty* – including guitarists Melvan Whittington and John Sterling, Sherwood Akuna on bass and drummer Joe Blocker – drums with the addition of several crack guitarists, keyboardists, gospel singers and horn players, as Lee revelled in the luxury of a big advance for the only time in his career. *Reel To Real*'s rollicking Stax'n'Hendrix sound is surprisingly slick, but Lee never sounds as if he's coasting. In fact, he sounds pretty pumped, as well he might: "Who Are You" sizzles with funky intent, while *Four Sail*'s "Singing Cowboy" is given an irresistibly low-slung makeover. It's not *Forever Changes*, but it is a rich, varied and soulful album that captures an exuberant Lee on an all-too-fleeting upswing.

EXTRAS: As it turns out, a wilder version of *Reel To Real* could have been constructed from the alternate takes. "With A Little Energy" and "Busted Feet" are superior to the reined-in album versions, while the righteous "Do It Yourself" was strangely overlooked.

SAM RICHARDS



THE MONOCHROME SET

Volume, Contrast, Brilliance...

TAPETE

Unreleased and rare cuts from indie-pop veterans

7/10

They were dealt a bad hand

in terms of commercial success and history swept them to music's cultish margins, but London's post-punk/proto indie popsters The Monochrome Set have been acclaimed in recent years by the good and the great. Graham Coxon, Iggy Pop and Alex Kapranos are acolytes, and they made an undeniable impact on The Smiths' early sound. Formed in 1978 by singer and songwriter Bid (né Ganesh Seshadri) and guitarist Lester Square, TMS nailed an elegant and deeply eccentric, lyrically caustic, tag-averse style that has come to represent English pop classicism. This "unreleased and rare" collection follows five years after their reformation and 33 years after *Volume One*. It spans 1978-'91 and the earlier cuts are strongest: 1978's "Fly Me To The Moon" (Joy Division with an oddly jolly, kosmische drive); "I Wanna Be Your Man" from the same year (a mix of Velvets-yart pop, '60s beat and psychedelic raga); and 1983's "Cilla Black", which shifts from galloping country noir to Scott Walker-ish drama in cleverly segued movements. Less winning are the late-'80s/early-'90s likes of "White Lightning" and "Bella Morte", which recall Paris Angels and New FADS, but '89's "I Want Your Skin" is a proggy triumph, hung on duelling guitars.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



PERE UBU

Architecture Of Language 1979-1982

FIRE

Second vinyl box mops up US weirdies' wilderness years

8/10

"Can't we be happy like

the tiny mice, the tiny mice?" David Thomas chirruped on 1981 single "Not Happy", gleefully ramming his new bucolic vision in the faces of his dwindling band of supporters. Perverse enough in the golden 1975-78 period anthologised on last year's *Elitism For The People*, Pere Ubu shook off most post-punk fellow travellers thereafter, the Cleveland oddballs' original train of thought having hit the buffers on 1979's extreme noise error *New Picnic Time*. Wearingly obtuse on the whole – "A Small Dark Cloud" amounts to around six minutes of electronic tweety noises – it concludes with the daunting "Jehovah's Kingdom Comes" (here retitled "Kingdom Come"), Thomas welcoming the end of days over a disembowelled approximation of The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows". Having apparently rediscovered his faith, the singer's disdain for sloppy morals and gloomy long-mac music fuelled the hello-trees, hello-sky extremism of 1980's *The Art Of Walking*, and the Captain Beefheart tiki of 1982's *Song Of The Bailing Man*. With no-one left to annoy, Ubu powered down, but their failure is more heroic in retrospect. Not a decline, but a deliberate descent.

EXTRAS: A fourth disc of contemporary singles plus outtakes and oddments.

JIM WIRTH

REVELATIONS

Why The Monochrome Set will never play the cruise ships...



► It's only thanks to their countless truly committed fans that some of the songs on The Monochrome Set's new compilation have seen the light of day. "Some of these things I forgot ever existed," says singer Bid, of the various digitised tapes that have come his way over the past 10 years. "I've put them all on the computer, although some are permanently lost because the tapes have degraded."

Bid's work is far from just archival. TMS occupies him full-time, despite his aneurysm in 2010. "While I was writing [2012 album] *Platinum Coils* after the stroke, I found that I had true aphasia, but I was still writing songs."

Bid has no taste for nostalgia, however. He recalls Cherry Red's 30th-anniversary celebrations: "We went in to do a rehearsal and down the corridor, X-Ray Spex were playing. We thought, 'We can't do that.' It was like performing for the cruise ships. The nice thing was, when we went to Japan in 2011, we thought it was just going to be old fans, but it was full of young people pogoing, shirts off."

SHARON O'CONNELL



PSYCHIC TV/PTV3

Fishscales Falling: A Smorgasbord Ov Delights

DAIS

Compiling demos, live recordings and new material from Genesis

6/10

P-Orridge's amorphous art-rock project

Recent years have seen Genesis P-Orridge's industrial group Throbbing Gristle get the full reissue treatment. Overlooked by comparison, though, is P-Orridge's post-Gristle group Psychic TV (since 2003, PTV3), whose tangled discography has remained rather more elusive. Now, New York's Dais Records has reissued all of PTV3's work as digital downloads, adding this iTunes-only compilation as an entry point. Strangely sequenced, it is presented mix-tape-style, with 50 minutes of music split across two unnamed sides. Droning electronic segments and improvised noise squalls melt into more conventionally "rock" moments – although conventional is a relative term here, of course, and perhaps a misnomer for P-Orridge's twisted take on psych and prog rock. "BB" is a swirling organ garage stomp with lyrics extolling the virtues of pandrogyny, while a live take on early Psychic TV single "Roman P" – an arch tribute to the director Roman Polanski – is raucously odd. Perhaps the highlight is "Maximum Swing", featuring vocals from the Butthole Surfers' Gibby Haynes and guitar from Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner: a spirited exorcism of Captain Beefheart at his most Satanically deranged.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTON



PURE HELL

Noise Addiction: 1978 New York & London Sessions

CHERRY RED

Forgotten African-American punkers' complete works

6/10

Looking back on Pure

Hell's days as New York Dolls hangers-on, bassist Kerry 'Lenny Still' Boles recalls "walking from 59th to Spruce St to catch the bus through gang territory with high heels and wigs on". It was a tough look to rock for scrawny white boys, and more confrontational still for four muscly young black men from macho Philadelphia. Early punk-rock adopters – drummer Michael 'Spider' Sanders was briefly a Doll at the death – Pure Hell nonetheless released just the one single, 1978's metal-edged "These Boots Are Made For Walking", while *Noise Addiction*, their only album, was to lay dormant for decades following a dispute with their manager, Jimi Hendrix's old boss Curtis Knight. The Heartbreakers' LAMF with Alvin Lee-level guitar chops, courtesy of Preston "Chip Wreck" Morris, it founders on a lack of killer tunes, "Hard Action", "Spoiled Sport" and "Courageous Cat" the best of a proto glam-metal bunch.

EXTRAS: A live DVD recorded for New York cable TV in 1978 showcases Morris' Hendrix-style play-your-guitar-round-the-back-of-your-neck trick and some impressive acrobatics from singer Kenny 'Stinker' Gordon, who is also pictured wearing a swastika T-shirt on stage at Max's Kansas City in the accompanying booklet. Classy.

JIM WIRTH

DAVID BOWIE

Bowie At The Beeb

PARLOPHONE

Bowie's revelatory BBC sessions, now on vinyl. *By Tom Pinnoch*



8/10

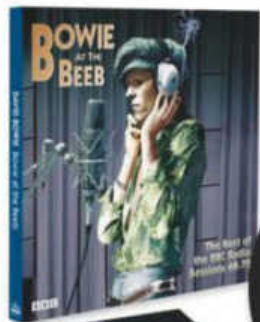
FOR AN ARTIST eager to stage-manage much of his life and career – including, as we discovered this year, his death – David Bowie was perversely happy to present his workings in public. Take 1973's 1980 *Floor Show* TV special, where "1984" was

previewed in an embryonic stage a year before it would appear on *Diamond Dogs*; or in December 1974, when a skeletal Bowie covered The Flares' "Foot Stompin'" live on America's *Dick Cavett Show*, and then thought nothing the following year of reusing Carlos Alomar's riff for "Fame".

Even the sheer number of references to movies, literature, philosophy and the occult in Bowie's songs – from bardos to Billy dolls – practically invites the listener to peer beneath the surface and examine his influences and his bookshelves.

Bowie At The Beeb, reissued for the first time on vinyl after its release on CD in 2000, presents more of Bowie's workings for our delectation. So quickly did he evolve between 1968 and 1972 that most of these sessions showcased songs that wouldn't be in the shops for months. After four songs with the Tony Visconti Orchestra from 1968 and two recorded with Junior's Eyes in late '69 (not broadcast at the time), we find Bowie taking over Radio 1 for a full hour in February 1970. Though the session is still incomplete – no "Buzz The Fuzz", "Karma Man" or "London Bye Ta-Ta" – we hear Bowie debut an incomplete, shorter "The Width Of A Circle" with his brand new sideman. "Michael's just come down from Hull," Bowie says. "I met him for the first time about two days ago." And with the entrance of Mick Ronson's aggressive, strangled lead guitar, the sound of the Spiders From Mars is prematurely hatched.

An electric "Wild Eyed Boy From Freecloud", recorded in March 1970, is darker and stranger when shorn of its syrupy orchestrations, and from the same session, unearthed for this vinyl reissue, is a full-band version of "The Supermen". Recorded a month before the version on *The Man Who Sold The World*, this is sleeker, heavier and more dynamic, with Ronson's mangled lead lines supremely exciting.



Bowie in 1971, at the time of *Hunky Dory*

One of the strangest sessions took place on June 3, 1971: with *Hunky Dory* still six months away, Bowie was joined at the BBC by George Underwood, who sings "Song For Bob Dylan" (not included here), Dana Gillespie, Geoff MacCormack, Arnold Corns guitarist Mark Carr-Pritchard, and Ronno, a group consisting of Ronson, Trevor Bolder and Woody Woodmansey. The jaunty opener, "Bombers", is sublime, with Bowie "on piano and an amazing pair of trousers", according to John Peel, while "Looking For A Friend", written for Arnold Corns, is strutting but slighter. With "Oh! You Pretty Things" subsequently lost, the most historically valuable selection from this session is "Kooks", written by Bowie to celebrate the birth of his son Zowie four days earlier. "I'd been listening to a Neil Young album," he tells Peel, "and they phoned through and said my wife had had a baby on Sunday morning. And I wrote this about the baby." He professes to be unsure of the words, but this meditative solo take is strikingly similar to the *Hunky Dory* version, a testament to Bowie's faith in intuition.

Just a month after *Hunky Dory*'s release in December 1971, Bowie was back at the BBC, now performing in the guise, if not the name, of Ziggy. Out are the quirky piano ballads, and in are sleazy rockers such as "Hang On To Yourself", "Ziggy Stardust" and a propulsive "I'm Waiting For The Man". Returning in May 1972, the Spiders preview a metallic "Suffragette City", which tops the album version for sheer energy. There's more Velvets worship too, with a brazen "White Light/White Heat" ("White light... gonna make me feel like Lou Reed"), while the Spiders' take on "Moonage Daydream" presages the more bombastic *Aladdin Sane*, with Ronson's guitar spewing molten chords and Bolder's bass buzzing and blown-out.

Later the same month, Bowie must have been feeling nostalgic, for here we're shunted back in time with "Space Oddity", "Changes", "Andy Warhol" and "Oh! You Pretty Things", before a session the following day brings us back to Ziggy with "Lady Stardust" – Bowie sounding even more like Elton John on the opening line than on the album – and a rawer "Rock'n'Roll Suicide".

Twenty-four days later, *Ziggy Stardust* was released, and Bowie would have no more time to chat with John Peel about Chuck Berry songs. Instead, he'd be producing his hero Lou Reed, and Bowie and America would devour each other with delight and disgust. There would be no room for BBC sessions, or for Ziggy himself.

Still, the short period covered by *Bowie At The Beeb* is a pivotal and fascinating one; if you want to hear Mick Ronson at the peak of his powers, "Kooks" in its infancy, or an ensemble cover of "It Ain't Easy", you'll find them all here, often as stunning as their 'official' versions. Ultimately, even when it seems as if Bowie is letting us peer behind the curtain to see the nuts and bolts of his work, the magic remains intact.

EXTRAS: Four heavyweight LPs housed in a sturdy box. "The Supermen" is previously unreleased, while the duo version of "Oh! You Pretty Things" was a Japan-only bonus track on the 2000 CD release.



The Specialist

Early-'80s outsider electro



Lost prophets: (l-r) Karel Beer and Bernard Szajner



THE (HYPOTHETICAL) PROPHETS

Around The World With (reissue, 1982)

INFINÉ

THE TAPES

Selected Works 1982-1992

ECSTATIC

8/10

Dadaist cut-ups and Cold War paranoia inform two albums of perverse dystopian electronics.

Like OMD, Frankie Goes To Hollywood and a fleet of lesser-spotted synthpop acts who drew inspiration from the threat of Soviet nuclear attack, The (Hypothetical) Prophets existed at the turn of the 1980s, and crammed into their one album, *Around The World With*, enough ideas to last a lifetime. In its first incarnation, this droll tête-à-tête between pioneering French composer Bernard Szajner – he conceived the laser harp made famous by Jean-Michel Jarre – and English flâneur Karel Beer took a satirical swipe at Russian ideology, causing the pair to adopt the pseudonyms Joseph Weil and Norman D Landing as a precautionary measure. The tactic worked because both survived, or perhaps the Soviets appreciated the absurdist humour and pulsing coldwave of

“Back To The Burner”, about a conflicted nuclear scientist.

When the project was picked up by CBS, Szajner and Beer widened their remit to take potshots at Western consumerism and social mores. “Fast Food”, their best-known track, is a neo-rockabilly number in the style of Daniel Miller’s Silicon Teens that sends up the hectic pace of city life. On “Person To Person” they trade lines from personal ads taken from *Time Out* and *The Village Voice*, while “I Like Lead” and “Fisherman’s Friend” offer lurid riffs on the stock market and weather forecast, respectively. If this sounds passé today, the way Szajner and Beer sprinkle pop motifs like saxophone and female backing vocals over such rich and uncompromising electronics gives the material a riveting contemporary edge, one reminiscent of Hector Zazou’s psychedelic *La Perversita* LP. Szajner had already released the spellbinding *Visions Of Dune* solo album in 1979, a radical kosmische set inspired by Frank Herbert’s *Dune*, but this one-off collaboration with Beer – who now books stand-up comedy in Paris – added a splash of surrealism to his sound. Infiné’s long-awaited reissue is sequenced the way the Prophets originally intended, and includes three bonus tracks.

Over in Genoa, meanwhile, operating far deeper underground, brothers Giancarlo and Roberto Drago found themselves reacting to Italy’s uneasy political climate of the early and mid-’80s as The Tapes, via the medium of DIY industrial minimalism. Throughout the decade, the pair dashed off tiny runs of cassettes of primitive machine funk and cut-up lo-fi loops, made using four-track recorders, mono-synths, and drum-machines. Italian new-wave connoisseur Alessio Natalizia (ex-Walls, now Not Waving) has sifted through these tapes and picked 21 tracks for the vinyl pressing of *Selected Works 1982-1992*.

From the proto-techno of “Time Out Of Joint” and “Tanz Fabrik” to the sci-fi lullabies of “Doubts” and “Falso Movimento 82”, each swaddled in tape hiss, much of the beauty in the Dragos’ music lies in the purity of their expression. With no expectations, they created their own compelling world of sound into which we can now plunge.

PIERS MARTIN



BLIND ALFRED REED

Appalachian Visionary

DUST-TO-DIGITAL

8/10

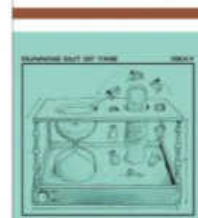
Underrated, quietly moving roots from the American South

Taped in summer 1927,

Ralph Peer’s recording sessions in Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia are legendary in roots music circles. But the magnitude of the major discoveries from those sessions – especially The Carter Family – cast a shadow across the rest of the musicians involved, even as, in the case of Blind Alfred Reed, their contribution to American vernacular music was every bit as potent. There are plenty of great songs on *Appalachian Visionary*, but two performances stand out: “The Wreck Of The Virginian”, which opens the set, a deceptively sprightly fiddle and vocal song, and “How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live”, where Reed’s voice – a rich, resonant thing, with little of the nasal, adenoidal burr of many early country singers – offers added emotional affect to a song that documents and laments the struggles of the working-class everyday. On “How Can...”, Reed’s son, Arville, accompanies him on intricate guitar. Arville gets a few of his own solo and duo slots (the latter with friend Fred Pendleton in the West Virginia Night Owls), but it’s father Alfred who lands the most potent blows – again and again.

EXTRAS: Great liners, rare photographs and 7/10 ephemera, all bound in hard cover.

JON DALE



REXY

Running Out Of Time (reissue, 1981)

URU/LUCKY NUMBER

7/10

Delightfully askew LP by short-lived synth-pop duo

It must have been no small effort to stand out amid the fashion plates of London’s

New Romantic scene. Nevertheless, Rex Nayman attracted the attention of Vic Martin one fateful night at a mutual hangout in Kingston upon Thames in 1980. A keyboardist who’d later serve for the Eurythmics, Martin asked the fashion student and Blitz Kid if she wanted to sing on a record – the fact she had no musical experience made little difference. Indeed, Nayman’s offhanded manner of delivering “(Don’t) Turn Me Away” – a winsome slice of synth-pop later released as Rexy’s debut single – would be one of many charming things about their music that can seem both entirely of its moment and utterly unique. Nayman and Martin’s collaboration didn’t last much beyond the release of 1981’s *Running Out Of Time*, but many contemporary artists have since declared a kinship with the duo’s deadpan, leftfield pop. Ariel Pink slipped a track onto a 2014 mixtape and Brooklyn singer Samantha Urbani founded a label to reissue Rexy’s 10-track debut. If the Young Marble Giants had recorded a demo for Ze, the result would not have been dissimilar to the most beguiling music here, be it the mutant disco exotica of “Nervoso” or “Alien”, a worthy anthem for misfits of any era. Only the sub-Flying Lizards covers of “Heartbreak Hotel” and “Johnny B Goode” prevent the album from being as fabulous as its supporters attest.

EXTRAS: None. JASON ANDERSON



SONIC YOUTH Washing Machine (reissue, 1995)

DGC

Radical adults' overlooked epic reissued on vinyl

If 1994's *Experimental Jet Set, Trash And No Star* was an abdication from the grunge

zeitgeist that Sonic Youth had been immersed in, then its follow-up was a kind of rebirth. Indeed, the New Yorkers found their new direction so exciting that they seriously considered changing their band name. Mostly tracked in the relaxed surroundings of Doug Easley's Memphis studios, *Washing Machine* (now wisely just an album title, and not the group's *nom de guerre*) saw Sonic Youth jam out and uncoil, mixing sheets of swirling, psychedelic guitars with their customary monstrous noise and hardcore abandon. The savage moments, like Thurston Moore's angry, impotent "Junkie's Promise" or Kim Gordon's "Panty Lies", are fine, but the quieter, longer tracks are where *Washing Machine* really triumphs, pointing the way towards Sonic Youth's more experimental works later in the decade. Kim Gordon had become bored of playing bass, so much of the record features a three-guitar-and-drums lineup, the intertwining leads lending "Little Trouble Girl" and "Unwind" a crystalline intricacy. It all climaxes with one of the group's most adventurous and moving songs, "The Diamond Sea", which begins in a hushed languor, but ebbs into its 19th minute on a tidal wave of extreme, cleansing noise.

EXTRAS: None, but *Goo* and *Dirty* are also newly reissued on heavyweight vinyl.

TOM PINNOCK



VARIOUS ARTISTS Studio One Showcase: The Sound of Studio One In The 1970s

SOUL JAZZ

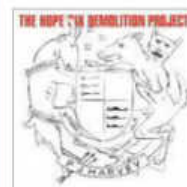
8/10 Golden-age cuts from "the Motown of Jamaica"

A linchpin of JA music since the mid-'50s, by the dawn of the '70s, Clement "Coxsone" Dodd had already played all-comers with his Downbeat Sound System, shaped the language of ska and rocksteady, and founded Studio One, a studio that churned out great music by the cartload. But as a new decade bedded in, Dodd's music factory had competition from up-and-coming producers such as King Tubby and Dodd's own former assistant Lee "Scratch" Perry, who were transforming Jamaican music with a range of revolutionary studio techniques. Despite this, the decade was a boom time for Studio One, Dodd and his engineers employing cutting-edge technologies such as syn-drums and tape looping, and a host of new deejays and singers passing through the booth. This 18-track comp merely scratches the surface, but is packed with gems. Future Massive Attack collaborator Horace Andy turns out the haunting roots of "See A Man's Face" and Sugar Minott's sweet-voiced "Have No Fear" presages the coming of lovers rock. Evidence that Dodd knew he had to keep up with the times, too, is evinced by updated tracks such as The Gaylads' "Joy In The Morning", given tough new backing by his Brentford session players.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON

COMING NEXT MONTH...



A host of artists new and old are making April a promising month for album releases. For a start, **PJ Harvey's** long-awaited ninth album, *The Hope Six Demolition Project*,

is due, and sees Polly Jean and her stalwart band take a strident look at the problems of today, both at home and abroad.

Graham Nash releases his first solo album in 14 years, *This Path Tonight*, while film director turned gigging electronic sensation **John Carpenter** unleashes his second solo album, *Lost Themes II*. Meanwhile, **Mogwai** play their mighty soundtracking hand with *Atomic*, a welcome companion to their scores for *Les Revenants* and *Zidane*.

There are strong albums from newer acts, too, with **Cate Le Bon's** *Crab Day*, **Kevin Morby's** *Singing Saw* and **Woods's** *City Sun Eater In The River Of Light* all excellent, eccentric efforts.

In the world of reissues, **The Cars'** classic records are collected in *The Elektra Years 1978-1987*, while kosmische pioneers **Cluster** and **Träd, Gräs Och Stenar** are each the subject of a lovingly compiled boxset.

Meanwhile, an overlooked gem, **Gimmer Nicholson's** *Christopher Idylls*, receives a welcome reissue: a transportative, dreamy instrumental guitar album, and the very first record to be recorded at Ardent Studios.

TOM.PINNOCK@TIMEINC.COM

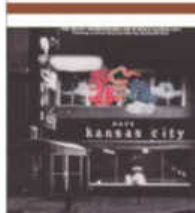
REVELATIONS

Rexy's Rex Nayman reflects on the duo's accidental career



Rex Neyman has fond memories of her time as a teenage clubber in the London hotspots that fostered the New Romantic scene - "You were your own creation," she says. Though the fashion drew the most attention, the scene's soundtrack was similarly wild and eclectic, ranging from Kraftwerk and Gina X to Jackson 5 and Latin. That diversity was reflected in the askew pop by the duo Nayman formed with Vic Martin. Both emphasise the casual nature of the collaboration that yielded Rexy's sole album - "Recording it was something we did to fill in time before the pubs opened," Nayman quips. Despite some Radio 1 airplay and attention in Europe, Rexy's progress was hampered by the limitations of their label, Alien. "They had a budget of about 20p," laments Nayman.

After Rexy sputtered out, Nayman went into fashion and Martin became a sideman for the Eurythmics and Gary Moore. Yet Rexy's music has a new life thanks to young admirers like Ariel Pink and Samantha Urbani. "I've really got into writing lyrics," says Nayman. "We hope to make a new album as soon as we can!" JASON ANDERSON



THE VELVET UNDERGROUND Live At Max's Kansas City

Live At Max's
Kansas City

RHINO

7/10 Lou's last VU night remastered in all its messy glory

When Lou Reed played

with the Velvets for the final time at a New York nightclub on August 23, 1970, Warhol starlet Brigid Polk taped both sets on a mono cassette recorder. Through the hiss and noise she captured the raw energy of the Velvets' garage chug, the very audible ambience of Max's as evocative as the music, particularly when the voice of *Basketball Diaries* author Jim Carroll is heard ordering double Pernods and trying to score. There was always a suspicion that it was a gag that had been added later, but Polk insists it was genuine. Reed introduces "I'm Waiting For The Man" as a "tender folk song about love between man and subway" and then stomps his way through "White Light/White Heat", wobbles uncertainly on "Pale Blue Eyes" and "Sunday Morning" and trails songs from soon-to-be-released *Loaded*, including "Lonesome Cowboy Bill", for some reason featured twice, while another *Loaded* song played on the night - "Who Loves The Sun" - has strangely been omitted.

EXTRAS: None. The 'five extra tracks' in the billing is misleading: it refers only to the original 1972 release and ignores the fact that they were all included on a subsequent two-disc reissue in 2004.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

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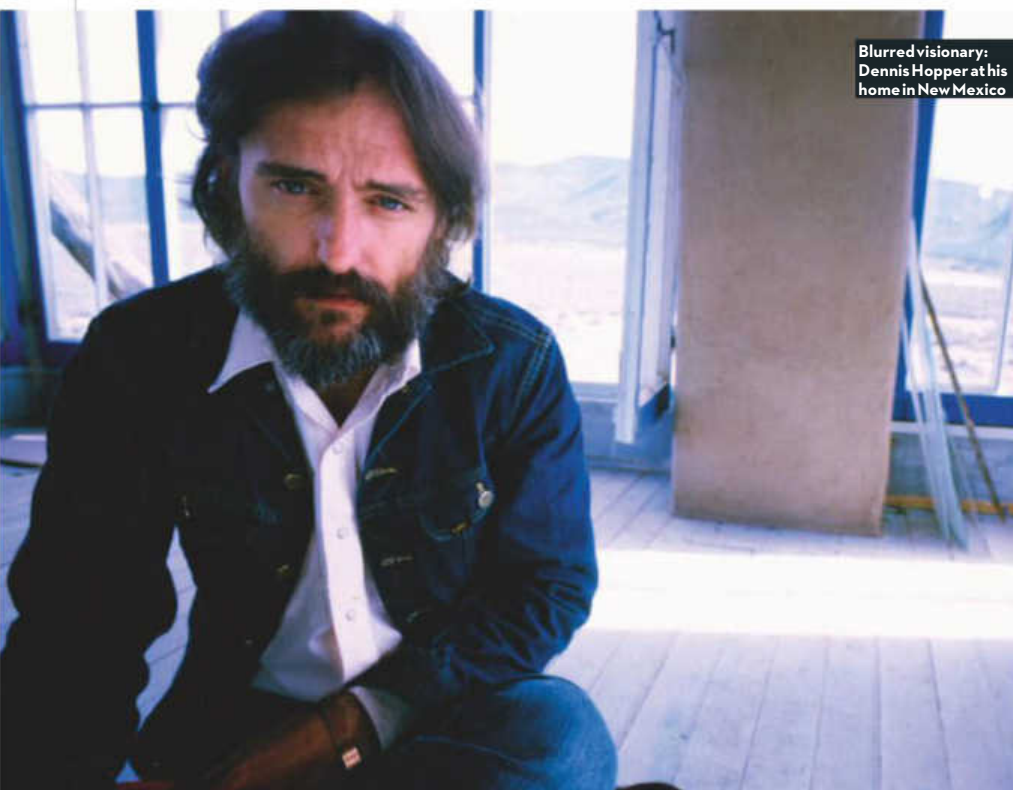
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Blurred visionary:
Dennis Hopper at his
home in New Mexico

THE AMERICAN DREAMER

STREAMING ON MUBI; BLU-RAY/DVD FROM ETIQUETTE PICTURES

Lost documentary captures Dennis Hopper's bearded glory before his own wilderness years. *By Damien Love*



8/10

IN THE WINTER of 1970-71, the writer and actor LM "Kit" Carson visited his friend Dennis Hopper's house outside Taos, in the desert of New Mexico. Hopper had just returned

from shooting *The Last Movie* in Peru and was busy editing the 48 hours of footage he'd brought back. After five days, Carson was convinced the process should be documented for posterity. Joining forces with photographer-turned-director Lawrence Schiller, the pair returned with a 16mm camera to shoot a freeform portrait of Hopper in his wild and lonely kingdom.

By turns excruciating and mesmerising, embarrassing, sordid and beautiful, the resulting film has since become legend. Partly because few other director portraits find the auteur under observation stripping off and strolling naked along a suburban sidewalk. And partly because, for 45 years, it has been practically impossible to see.

As part of his countercultural mission statement – and his mission to boost his revolutionary image – Hopper instructed Schiller and Carson only to

distribute the film on university campuses. For decades, then, *The American Dreamer* existed only as scratched college prints or bleary bootlegs. But now, fully restored, the film will be available on the arthouse video-on-demand service MUBI from February 12 to March 13; meanwhile, a region-free Blu-ray/DVD combo has been issued by Etiquette Pictures in the US.

If *The American Dreamer* was envisaged as a countercultural rallying cry in 1971, what lends it potency today is our retrospective knowledge of what came next. The film ostensibly captures Hopper at his height, having shaken the industry with the phenomenal success of *Easy Rider* and poised to make the film of his dreams.

In fact, though, it freezes him at the edge of an abyss, about to experience the career-wrecking commercial failure of *The Last Movie* and enter a wilderness from which it took a decade and a half to

emerge. Most striking is how, beneath his exhausted bluster and posturing, he seems to sense it coming. Early on, Schiller asks what will happen if *The Last Movie* doesn't find an audience. Hopper assures him it will; then, tellingly, ruminates on Orson Welles, whom he'd recently encountered going cap in hand around the studios, failing to get funding.

Pressure was building on Hopper. For different reasons, the acidheads of the counterculture and the heads of Universal studio were both on his back, impatient to see his *Easy Rider* follow-up. Added to the weight of their expectations were his own. *The Last Movie* meant far more to him than Captain America and Billy. It was a movie he'd been

Few other director portraits find the auteur under observation strolling naked along a sidewalk

dreaming about since the early '60s, and a deeply personal statement about Hollywood's destructive effects. As he started editing, though, he found it slipping out of reach. Originally scheduled for three months, it would take him more than a year to complete his cut.

Meanwhile, he'd just come out of his disastrous eight-day marriage to Michelle Phillips, and was looking to sleep with every woman he

could. Meanwhile again, his appetite for booze and drugs was tipping into addiction. More than filming him working on *The Last Movie*, Carson and Schiller film Hopper *not* working on it: firing rifles in the desert; offering philosophical pearls such as, "I don't believe in reading"; and, indeed, bent double on a broken bed, baring his ass for fondling by a coterie of 30 naked young women, in a toe-curling group "sensitivity encounter".

Alongside Orson Welles, the other phantom on Hopper's mind is Charles Manson, whom he admits having recently visited in jail. At points, filling his compound with stoned chicks and lecturing them, it seems as if Hopper, having already grown the beard, is considering picking up where Manson left off.

Then again, it pays to consider how much Hopper is playing "Dennis Hopper" here. It's key to remember that, behind the camera, Carson had recently starred in *David Holzman's Diary*, the brilliant 1967 mockumentary that debunked cinéma vérité and shared themes with *The Last Movie*: namely, how the very presence of a camera warps reality, rendering it fake.

Hopper makes the very point in a scene where he takes Schiller to task over his invasive filming – a confrontation that was itself staged. *The American Dreamer* isn't simply a significant documentary about New Hollywood. With its reflexive nature, and its nagging suggestion of something that has just been missed – the impending sense of "we blew it" – it's a key movie of that wave. See it, remember the wild Dennis that was, and hope that, someday, *The Last Movie* itself will be released from limbo.

EXTRAS: None.





COMFORT AND JOY

STUDIOCANAL

A "serious" Glasgow comedy, directed by Bill Forsyth

After the popular *Gregory's Girl* (1981) and *Local Hero* (1983), director Bill Forsyth delivered a low-key romantic comedy loosely based on Glasgow's drug-fuelled

7/10

ice-cream wars, starring Bill Paterson as an emotionally adrift local DJ who is captivated by an ice-cream seller (Clare Grogan at her most alluring). Less celebrated than its predecessors, the film has aged well, not least because of the excellent cinematography of Chris Menges, who captures the city in a romantic half-light.

EXTRAS: Interviews with Bill Forsyth,

7/10 Bill Paterson and Clare Grogan.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



DEUTSCHLAND '83

UNIVERSAL

German spy show looks back on the Berlin Wall and '80s style

This eight-part German espionage thriller is set during the height of the Cold War, as Reagan's US began stockpiling missiles in West Germany, aiming East

7/10

over the Wall. Thrown into the cataclysmic sabre rattling is Martin (Jonas Nay), a young East German border guard, bewildered to find himself a spy, forced into the bright West to steal military secrets. It lacks the complexity of the similar, brilliant, 1980s-set KGB-in-Washington series *The Americans*, but the retro styling is easy to watch – and a German take on the period has unique heat.

EXTRAS: Interviews.

6/10 DAMIEN LOVE



EUREKA

EUREKA

Blu-ray debut for underrated Nic Roeg blow-out

Alongside his superb children's film, *The Witches*, this 1982 strangeness stands as Nic Roeg's last fully straggled movie. A surly Klondike prospector (Gene Hackman) strikes

8/10

it rich in the 1920s; 30 years later, living on a private Caribbean island, he's washed-up inside and suspicious of everyone. While his wife boozes and his daughter (Theresa Russell) dallies with a gigolo (Rutger Hauer), he's targeted by Joe Pesci, a gangster who wants his property. Troubling currents swirl beneath the surface, with voodoo and Mickey Rourke on top.

EXTRAS: Booklet, isolated score/effects

7/10 track, trailer.

DAMIEN LOVE



Tribute to George: (l-r) "Weird Al" Yankovic, Wayne Coyne, Brandon Flowers, Dhani Harrison, Jonathan Bates, at the Fonda Theater, LA, September 28, 2014

GEORGE FEST A Night To Celebrate The Music Of George Harrison

HOT RECORDS / VAGRANT

Live tribute curated by Dhani Harrison, and starring Brian Wilson and the Flaming Lips



6/10

FILMED ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2014, at the Fonda Theater in Los Angeles, this two-hour tribute to the Quiet One (an accompanying album is being released in various formats) grew from his son Dhani's desire to present "a small club show where my generation of musicians

could cut loose on some of the deeper tracks from his career". The premise allows for an uneven but enjoyable alternative to the establishment vibes of Concert For George, held at the Royal Albert Hall in November 2002 on the first anniversary of Harrison's death, and studded with Messrs Clapton, McCartney, Lynne and Petty.

George Fest is a looser affair, dominated by fans rather than peers. Many of these artists first came to Harrison's music from unexpected angles. In one of the brief interview segments that punctuate the concert footage, Brandon Flowers reveals that his introduction was the 1987 single "I Got My Mind Set On You". Onstage, he grins his way through it like a competition winner. At the weightier end of the scale, Ian Astbury's sombre

heavy on the teleprompter.

Mostly, however, this is about the children of the '70s and '80s paying their respects – often a little too respectfully. Norah Jones – daughter of Ravi Shankar, so practically family – purrs through a sleepily faithful "Something". Perry Farrell's "Here Comes The Sun" is sleek but grounded. You conceivably may not have room in your life for "Weird Al" Jankovic doing a decidedly un-weird "What Is Life", or Cold War Kids crucifying "Taxman", but for every dud the karmic balance is restored with a neatly turned winner. Flaming Lips' wig-out take on "It's All Too Much" brings some welcome chutzpah to the proceedings, while Black Rebel Motorcycle Club raise dark heat on a grungy "Art Of Dying". An ensemble finale of "Handle With Care" and "All Things Must Pass" is warm and touching.

A nicely scruffy souvenir, *George Fest* is flawed and fitting testament to the diversity of Harrison's writing, as well as his long reach. And when a moustachioed Dhani – rocking a very 'White Album' look – tears through "Savoy Shuffle", you don't even need to shut your eyes to believe his old man might be in the room.

GRAEME THOMSON



HOMELAND SEASON 5

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Latest instalment of political thriller series keeps up the tension

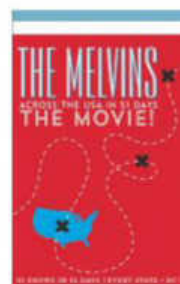
Season 5 of *Homeland* found Carrie in Berlin, working security for a billionaire philanthropist. CIA enforcer Peter Quinn's

8/10

in town, too, on a Company-sanctioned killing spree, Carrie one of his targets. Meanwhile, radical Berlin hackers have downloaded compromising CIA files, bringing Saul into the picture in time to discover top-level Russian infiltration of the Agency, but who's the traitor? A terrorist plot only Carrie can foil further added to the blistering tensions of an exceptional series of multiple betrayals and twisted loyalties.

EXTRAS: Documentary, Making Of.

6/10 ALLAN JONES



THE MELVINS

Across The USA in 51 Days: The Movie!

IPECAC

Hard-rock veterans laugh at life on tour

In the hands of some bands, a feat such as that documented here – a world-record-breaking tour calling at every US state – would be presented as an uplifting tale of

7/10

camaraderie and survival against the odds. Hard-rock freaks The Melvins take a different approach. *Across The USA...* commences with each of the group flipping off the camera, before rubbernecking a flaming pick-up truck abandoned on the highway. Shot entirely on mobile phone with each day compressed into a minute, the result is a patchwork capturing the drab debauchery of tour-life with characteristic bone-dry humour.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON

Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

This month: Ben Wheatley's take on JG Ballard is a tower of strength; Charlie Kaufman's anomalous latest; the Coens' epic satire; punks in peril

High-Rise Considering how deeply JG Ballard's novels have penetrated popular culture, it's surprising how few have made it to the big screen. Spielberg's *Empire Of The Sun* and Cronenberg's *Crash* are the most well-known, but there's also Jonathan Weiss' rarely screened 1999 adaptation of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and *Aparelho Voador A Baixa Altitude* – a Portuguese-Swedish co-production based on a short story, "Low-Flying Aircraft". Previously, Nic Roeg, Paul Mayersberg and Bruce Robinson have all toiled unsuccessfully to film Ballard's 1975 breakthrough novel, *High-Rise*. In the event, Ben Wheatley has finally brought it to cinemas in his first major work since *A Field In England*: another piece about a very English type of psychosis.

Wheatley envisions *High-Rise* as an occult, psychedelic seizure; nowhere near as coldly alarming as Ballard's book, but horrific in its own way. The story takes place in a newly built tower block whose occupants turn on one another when the building's systems begin to fail. After a prim, orderly beginning, where Tom Hiddleston's Dr Robert Laing moves into the tower, Wheatley lets reality slip away – a Regency fancy-dress party; a white horse clip-clopping across the roof-terrace garden; a car park full of burned-out cars – before pitting floor against floor in all-out block war.

Hiddleston – resembling *Low*-era Bowie – makes Laing detached and indifferent, a coolly immaculate cipher for the film's events. Around him orbits Luke Evans' documentary-maker Richard Wilder, who responds viscerally to the building-wide mayhem. As the block's architect, Jeremy Irons is at his most Jeremy Irons – inscrutable, implacable. Sienna Miller, as Laing's free-spirited neighbour, is one of the few characters who seem able to navigate the twisting psychological landscape inside the tower. Elsewhere, James Purefoy and Reece Shearsmith deliver grotesque comic performances. Portishead's stately cover of ABBA's "SOS" soundtrack a montage of freewheeling chaos. Wheatley may lack Ballard's satirical edge – the issues of class that percolate the novel have been sidelined, for instance – but his devilish glee is infectious.

Tall story: Tom Hiddleston in Ben Wheatley's *High-Rise*

➤ **Anomalisa** The principal characters in Charlie Kaufman's previous films have traditionally been alienated outsider figures, struggling to connect with themselves and their environment. In his last film, *Synecdoche, New York*, Philip Seymour Hoffman's disaffected theatre director built a gigantic set to emulate New York and instructed his cast to improvise entire lives. For Kaufman's latest project, he goes one step further. His lead, Michael Stone (David Thewlis), is a typical Kaufman creation: an author and inspirational speaker whose life is in crisis. His marriage is in slow decline and he has no connection with his son. In Cincinnati for a conference, he looks up an old flame, Bella, considering an affair. The hotel he is staying in is called the Al Fregoli, which is important: in fregoli syndrome, a person holds a delusional belief that those around them are in fact a single tormentor who is able to change appearance or is in disguise. "I think I might have psychological problems," Michael explains to Lisa. "It's hard to explain. I've been running for a long time now. Things kind of shifted."

Some disclosure, at this point. *Anomalisa* is a stop-motion film. The project originated in 2005 as part of Carter Burwell's Theatre Of The New Ear series of 'sound plays'. The cast consisted of David Thewlis, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Tom Noonan;

who all appear in this film version, co-directed by Kaufman and Duke Johnson. Critically, to represent the fug in which Michael now resides, all the characters he interacts with look and sound identical (voiced by Noonan). There are precedents, of course: you might recall the roomful of identical Malkoviches in Kaufman's debut, *Being John Malkovich*.

In this instance, though, the effect is disturbing rather than funny. Michael's fugue has left him isolated from the rest of the world: no wonder he can no longer recognise individual characteristics. Alone in his hotel bathroom, his face begins to crack and you imagine it is about to fall off to reveal bland, smooth features identical to the other faces around him. Only Jennifer Jason Leigh's Lisa stands out. "Jesus, someone else!" Michael exclaims when he first hears her, instantly and inexplicably recognising her as an anomaly – an "anomalisa", in fact – who jolts him from his doldrums. Kaufman's superb film once again finds this idiosyncratic creator discovering new ways to explore complex human conditions – love and loneliness chief among them.

➤ **Hail, Caesar!** In 1991's *Barton Fink*, the Coen brothers put a lowly Hollywood screenwriter through the ringer. The Coens revisit that film's fictional studio, Capitol Pictures, in their new one,

Reviewed this month...



HIGH-RISE
Director Ben Wheatley
Starring Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons
Opens March 18
Cert 15
8/10



ANOMALISA
Directors Charlie Kaufman, Duke Johnson
Starring David Thewlis, Jennifer Jason Leigh
Opens March 11
Cert 15
9/10



HAIL, CAESAR!
Directors Joel and Ethan Coen
Starring Josh Brolin, George Clooney
Opens March 4
Cert 12A
8/10



GREEN ROOM
Director Jeremy Saulnier
Starring Imogen Poots, Patrick Stewart
Opens May 13
Cert 18
7/10



MOJAVE
Director William Monahan
Starring Oscar Isaac, Garrett Hedlund
Opens March 25
Cert 15
6/10



Hail, Caesar! Although the action takes place in 1951 – a decade later than *Barton Fink* – Joel and Ethan are still intent on making life miserable for their latest protagonist: Eddie Mannix (Josh Brolin), the studio's "head of physical production", who endures a litany of woes including a kidnapping, a pregnant leading lady, catty gossip columnists and the capricious decisions handed down by his unseen superior.

For their last few films, the Coens appear to have drawn inspiration from their own formative experiences. *A Serious Man* (2009) outlined a midlife crisis in the American Midwest in the 1960s, which happens to be where and when the Coens themselves were raised. Meanwhile, 2013's *Inside Llewyn Davis* was a portrait of a New York folk singer whose career was entwined with another, Bob Dylan; another son of the Coens' home state, Minnesota. The 1950s setting for *Hail, Caesar!* coincides with the Coens' own early cinema trips. You suspect that growing up they would have seen films like the ones represented here: the musical top-lined by song-and-dance man Burt Gurney (Channing Tatum), the period drama directed by Laurence Laurentz (Ralph Fiennes) or the folksy Western starring down-home rodeo star Hobie Doyle (Alden Ehrenreich).

In that respect, *Hail, Caesar!* feels as much like a warm tribute to the studio pictures of the Coens' youth as it does an exuberant comedy in its own right. Mannix's principal concern is finding the whereabouts of Baird Whitlock (George Clooney), the studio's biggest star, who has gone missing from the set of *Hail, Caesar!* (subtitle: "A Tale Of The Christ"), a sword-and-sandals epic loosely modelled on *Ben-Hur*. He suspects foul play, which leads him to a group of Communist writers ("We're for the little guy"), a nod to Dalton Trumbo's political activities during the same period. The films within films are expertly done

– who knew Channing Tatum could do tap? – and the Coens impressively juggle an ensemble cast that also includes Scarlett Johansson, Frances McDormand, Tilda Swinton and Michael Gambon.

➤ **Green Room** *Blue Ruin*, the previous film from writer-director Jeremy Saulnier, was a grubby, low-key revenge drama that showcased not only Saulnier's love for genre films but also his ingenuity working with a minuscule budget. For *Green Room*, he stays deep in genre territory. It is essentially a spin on hillbilly horror, where a touring punk band find themselves at the mercy of a bunch of backwoods neo-Nazis led (perhaps improbably) by Patrick Stewart. The references are explicit – *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, *Straw Dogs* – but Saulnier's strength is breathing new life into this familiar set-up.

The Ain't Rights (influences: "Misfits... Poison Idea... Sabbath, Ozzy and Dio") are a struggling punk band, barely able to scrape together funds to self-release a 7-inch. While on tour, a show is cancelled and to scrape back some cash, they accept a sketchy engagement to play a matinee show in a bar in remote Oregon. The clientele, they are warned, are "right wing, technically ultra-left. Don't talk politics." In a surprisingly bold gambit, the band begin their set with a cover of "Nazi Punks Fuck Off". Amazingly, it doesn't get them killed.

Instead it is the accidental discovery of a murder scene in the venue's green room that puts the lives of bassist Pat (Anton Yelchin), guitarist Sam (Alia Shawkat), singer Tiger (Callum Turner) and drummer Reece (Joe Cole) on the line. Barricaded in the green room, help comes from an unexpected source – a neo-Nazi (Imogen Poots) who is trapped with them. Outside, meanwhile, Patrick Stewart's gimlet-eyed *gruppenführer* calls in the attack dogs. At 94 minutes, Saulnier keeps the focus tight.

➤ **Mojave** Judging by his scripts for *The Departed*, *Body Of Lies* and *Kingdom Of Heaven*, William Monahan's writing is concerned with what happens to men under pressure in extraordinary circumstances. Men doing man things, basically, be they deep-cover policemen, conflicted CIA operatives or Crusader knights. *Mojave* – Monahan's second film as writer/director after the dismal *London Boulevard* – adds to this list a listless Hollywood star (Garrett Hedlund), who is taunted by a murderous vagrant (Oscar Isaac). The story begins in the Mojave desert, where Hedlund's Tom retreats for a period of self-discovery. There, he crosses paths with Isaac's Jack, who we can tell is the bad guy by his fondness for quoting Melville and John Stuart Mill. Jack follows Thomas back to Beverly Hills, where he insinuates his way into Thomas' life. Murder and some long speeches follow.

Monahan's intention to balance a *Cape Fear*-style cat-and-mouse thriller with a potshot at Hollywood privilege isn't entirely successful, though touches of welcome dark humour flash through the script. Hedlund – who seems to be channelling Brad Pitt's slacker in *Kalifornia* – is comprehensively acted off-screen by Isaac. The sole reason to see *Mojave*, his acting is entirely off the scale as he chews his way gamely through Monahan's tough-guy reveries.

Also out...

STRETCH AND BOBBITO: RADIO THAT CHANGED LIVES

OPENS FEBRUARY 26

Doc about the late-night DJs whose '90s radio show was instrumental in showcasing emerging hip-hop acts including Jay Z, Eminem and the Wu-Tang Clan.

LONDON HAS FALLEN

OPENS MARCH 3

The British PM is dead. Westminster Abbey blown up. Only Gerard Butler and his steely gaze can save the day.

HITCHCOCK/TRUFFAUT

OPENS MARCH 4

Scorsese, David Fincher, Wes Anderson and others discuss the legacy of Hitch and Truffaut. Reviewed last issue.

TIME OUT OF MIND

OPENS MARCH 4

Richard Gere is a homeless man in New York. New film from Oren Moverman, screenwriter of Dylan biopic *I'm Not There*.

TRUTH

OPENS MARCH 4

Drama with Robert Redford as 60 Minutes anchor Dan Rather, investigating then-president George W Bush.

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

OPENS MARCH 14

Cousin to the JJ Abrams-produced found-footage monster movie; a young woman wakes up in an underground shelter with only John Goodman for company.



ROCK THE KASBAH

OPENS MARCH 18

Bill Murray's washed-up band manager ends up in Kabul where his fortunes appear to change. Barry Levinson directs.

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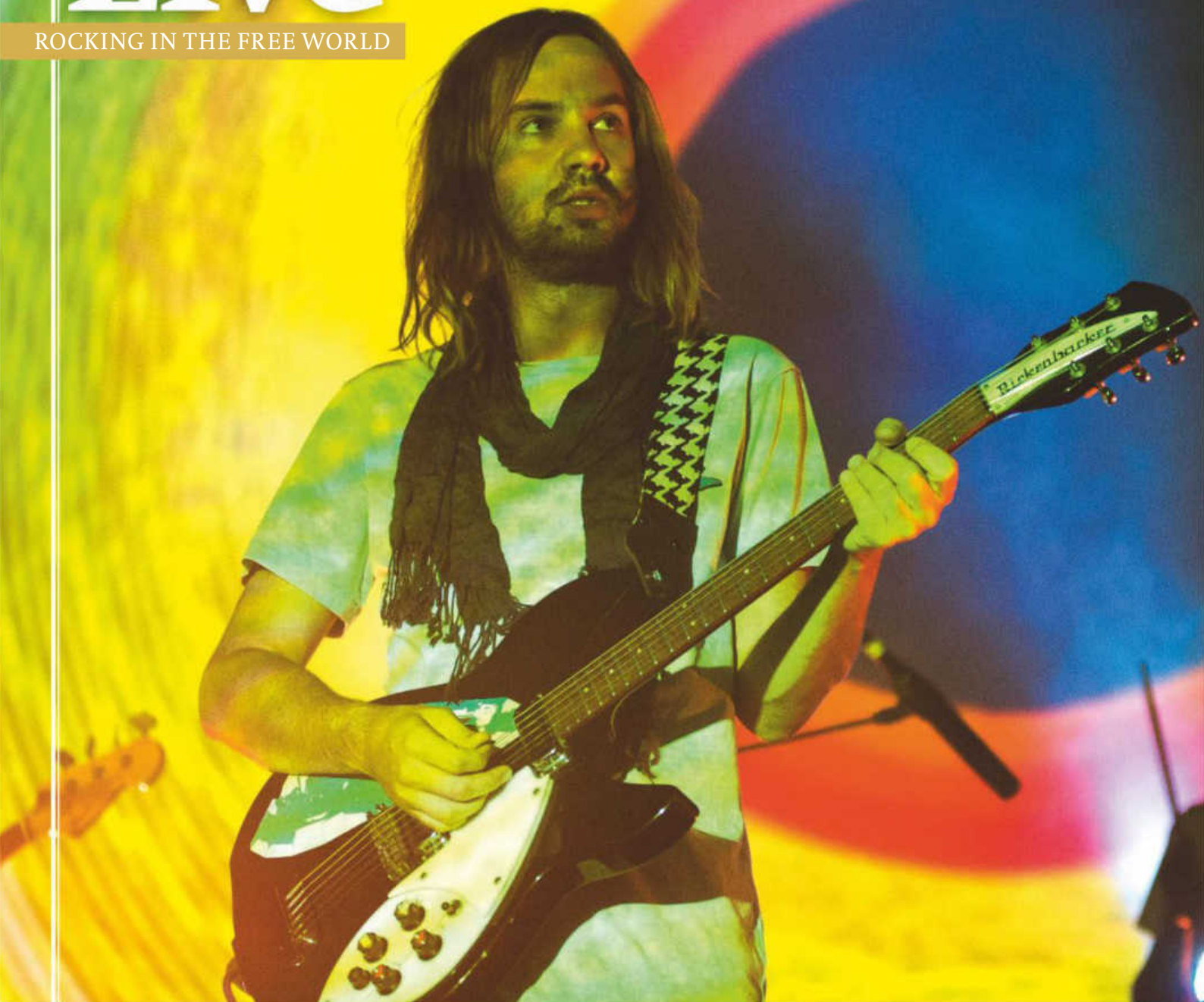
WELCOME TO ME

OPENS MARCH 25

Kristen Wiig's mentally ill lottery winner drops her medication and uses her wealth to star in an autobiographical talk show.

Live

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TAME IMPALA

VORST NATIONAAL, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, JANUARY 30, 2016

“Yes I’m changing!” Can Kevin Parker turn the cult of lonerism into stadium rock?

WITH LAST YEAR’S *Currents*, Kevin Parker largely threw out the playful psychedelic rock of Tame Impala’s first two albums and went electronic. This was no glitchy, *Kid A*-esque left-turn; instead, Parker claims that he attempted to channel the euphoric feel of Goan beach raves, with a view to hearing his

music played in clubs. The commercial success of *Currents*, however – more than 120,000 copies sold in the US so far – has meant that Parker and his band have instead headed straight for arenas.

Tonight, they have packed out the Vorst Nationaal, a cavernous 8,000-capacity space on Brussels’ southern edge. This being a post-Bataclan Europe, security is tight, and gun-packing police mill around by the bars and food

stalls in the busy lobby. It is a curiously impersonal place to see a band whose music is so much the product of one man; indeed, with Parker playing every instrument on *Currents*, along with taking on production, engineering and mixing duties, the sound of Tame Impala very much emanates from a private, personal space, not the sort of place where you have to shell out 50 cents to use the toilet. Eight-thousand people is quite a crowd to invite inside your mind, especially when you’ve named your second album *Lonerism*, and yet Parker seems to enjoy the novelty, saying: “We don’t often get to play in places as amazing and circular as this.”

Tame Impala have brought along a considerable, kaleidoscopic light show and back projections to make up for Parker’s lack of conventional presence. When the lights dim at 9pm, an oscilloscope traces a wild pattern on the backdrop, spinning faster and faster, until the



Guitar-free zone: Parker with Dominic Simper

Tripping the light: Kevin Parker of Tame Impala

group, clustered tightly in the centre of the large stage, rip into the sublime “Let It Happen”. Whereas Tame Impala’s previous epics such as “Apocalypse Dreams” took inspiration from the trippier, psychedelic likes of Pink Floyd, the seven minutes of “Let It Happen” twist and turn like a 12-inch remix, the groove looping mechanically until a new beat drops and the song enters a parallel realm, with Parker singing through a Vocoder and playing funky, fuzzy lead guitar.

Throughout their set, the five-piece impressively replicate the studio-bound textures that fill *Currents*; “The Moment” is as slick and propulsive as it is on record, while drummer Julien Barbagallo nails the crisp beats of “Eventually” and “The Less I Know The Better”.

SET LIST

- 1 Intro/Let It Happen
- 2 Mind Mischief
- 3 Why Won't They Talk To Me?
- 4 It Is Not Meant To Be
- 5 The Moment
- 6 Elephant
- 7 Yes I'm Changing
- 8 The Less I Know The Better
- 9 Eventually
- 10 Alter Ego
- 11 'Cause I'm A Man
- 12 Apocalypse Dreams
- 13 Feels Like We Only Go Backwards
- 14 New Person, Same Old Mistakes

in places this size, but it’s undeniably entertaining. Likewise, Parker’s attempt to spark a singalong on “Feels Like We Only Go Backwards” is another successful, if slightly uneasy, moment of showmanship.

During the more electronic moments in the set, guitarist Dominic Simper joins Pond’s Jay Watson on keyboards, and Parker abandons his guitar, enabling the lineup to really capture the lush analogue sweep of “Yes I’m Changing”.

The guitars are brought back for pre-*Currents* material, with the glammy stomp of “Elephant” a highlight. Perhaps as a nod to the grand arenas they’re now performing in, Barbagallo’s brief drum solo in the song is newly extended – at about 10 seconds, though, this is hardly “Toad” territory.

There are some concessions to the size of the venues Tame Impala are now playing in, though. At one point, a solo Parker generates abstract, fragmented guitar noise, his playing tracked by the giant oscilloscope on the screen behind him. A sort of psych-rock equivalent of Freddie Mercury’s “Day-oh” nonsense, it’s the kind of spectacle that can only work

The sheer emotion and feeling of inclusivity in Tame Impala’s music is enough to fill spaces like these several times over

The songs themselves hold the attention, though; the swelling synths, fuzz leads and glacial pace of slow jam “Cause I’m A Man” perfectly suit the echoey space, while “Eventually”, backed by rainbow fractals, sees hands in the air in the pit and hordes of people standing on the balconies. Strange scenes for such sensitive, unbombastic songs, over which Parker sings of loneliness, break-ups, alienation and disappointment, with the quiet resignation of an everyman: “*They say people never change,*” he sings sadly on “Yes I’m Changing”, “*but that’s bullshit/They do.*” The crowd tonight are perhaps shocked that the intensely personal music that’s soothed them from their earphones is now being broadcast through an enormous PA, but it has a euphoric effect. As such, when Parker moves forward to greet the front row of the pit, there’s a real sense of an emotional connection taking place, and not just stadium glad-handing.

If more evidence of Tame Impala’s surprising infiltration of the mainstream were needed, Rihanna’s cover of *Currents*’ closer, “New Person, Same Old Mistakes”, on the recent *Anti* provides it. As a nod to her version, the group close the set with the song, which they debuted, sparkling and bass-heavy, the previous night in Amsterdam.

For someone who admits they’re happiest in their home studio, it seems as if the frontman could get used to these larger stages. While he’s too shy and retiring ever to be a strong presence on stage, the sheer emotion and feeling of inclusivity in Tame Impala’s music is more than enough to fill spaces like these several times over. As Parker says on “Yes I’m Changing”, “*If you don’t think it’s a crime you can come along, with me.*”

TOM PINNOCK



SCRITTI POLITTI

LONDON ROUNDHOUSE, FEBRUARY 5, 2016

Songs To (Try To) Remember: the anxious, ultimately heroic return of Green Gartside

IMMACULATELY DRESSED IN denim, with fantastic Day-Glo trainers, you would never guess Scritti Politti auteur Green Gartside was a day over 45 – let alone 60. However, as he drops his guitar, struggles to reattach its strap and gets tangled in cable before he has played a note, it is not immediately obvious that he was ever a pop star, either.

"With you in a minute," he promises, a bandmate answering his distress flare.

Pause. Scrabbling.

"Two minutes and I'll be with you."

Scritti Politti observers have learned to be patient. Over a career approaching the 38-year mark, Gartside has only finished five LPs; a measure – perhaps – of the frantic psychological foot-pedalling going on beneath the waterline of their swan-smooth music.

Since 1980, Scritti have barely played live, barring a smattering of shows to accompany their most recent album, 2006's twinkly and

perverse *White Bread Black Beer*. This one-off date as part of the Roundhouse's In The Round season marks the elegant live debuts of a good number of Scritti classics – not least 1982's dub dissertation "Asylums In Jerusalem" and its squatter-funk flipside, "Jacques Derrida". His relatively easy between-song chatter, however, cannot mask the anxiety that underpins his performances – eyes clamped shut, fists clenching and unclenching.

Scritti's music was rarely as smooth as it sounded. In their 1980s pomp, when Green looked like Princess Diana, major international hits such as "Wood Beez" and "Absolute" emerged from a tortuous process of philosophical debate and self-flagellation. Introducing 1981's "The Sweetest Girl" – the first song he wrote aiming at a mainstream audience – Gartside reminisces about squatting in Camden, going to Young Communist Party meetings and "men's groups", the purpose of

which were to spend an hour discussing men's inherent unworthiness. In that context, simply writing a song called "The Sweetest Girl" was dangerously transgressive.

Emboldened when that indie single reached No 64 in the proper charts, Green's entryist pop experiments became grander,

A picture of determination, Gartside wears his torments as lightly as he can

breakthrough album *Cupid & Psyche 85* perfecting a candyfloss sound that referenced smooth soul and lovers rock, with nods to Roland Barthes, William Empson and Friedrich

SET LIST

- 1 The Sweetest Girl
- 2 Day Late And A Dollar Short
- 3 Die Alone
- 4 The Word Girl
- 5 The Boom Boom Bap
- 6 Jacques Derrida/Come Clean
- 7 Oh Patti
- 8 Brushed With Oil, Dusted With Powder
- 9 Asylums In Jerusalem
- 10 Skank Bloc Bologna
- 11 28/8/78
- 12 New album excerpts:
I Wrote This Song For Today/
You Don't Love/Hair Pull/
Slyday Morning/Two Years Ago/Mother Succubus/I
Wrote This Song For Today (Reprise)
- 13 Petrococadollar
- 14 Wood Beez
- 15 Absolute
- ENCORE
- 16 Slow Deceit
- 17 Untitled

Nietzsche – all namechecked tonight.

Aiming higher still for 1988's ultra-sophisticated *Provision*, Gartside suffered a nervous collapse, the refrain of the LP's standout 45, "Oh Patti" – originally featuring Miles Davis, and also given its live debut tonight – proving cruelly prescient: "He only wants the world to love him, then he goes and spoils it all."

Based in America at his giddy peak (he recalls meeting Kraftwerk's Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider at a Tito Puente concert in New York – "We hate reggae," they told him), Gartside had retreated back to his native Wales by the time 1999's hybrid hip-hop LP *Anomie & Bonhomie* was completed. Introducing "Brushed With Oil, Dusted With Powder" from that record, Gartside remembers that he started writing the song in a Hollywood hotel using a guitar that belonged to Joni Mitchell, and finished it "in a flat above a dentist's surgery in Newport".

Now resettled in London, Gartside seems to have found what passes for contentment, and while rapture greets oldies like 1978 debut single "Skank Bloc Bologna" – "Uptown Top Ranking" meets "Public Image" – and wallflower's floor-filler "Absolute" at the Roundhouse, he can take further encouragement from the reception accorded to a medley of fragments from an as-yet unrecorded sixth Scritti album.

A picture of determination, Gartside wears his torments as lightly as he can. His choirboy-pitched singing tone several agonising octaves up from his speaking voice, he stumbles and fumbles with lyric sheets ("I never have learned the lyrics to any of my songs," he admits) and turns away shaking his head more than once. The only person, perhaps, who spends this night of triumph wishing it was over.

JIM WIRTH

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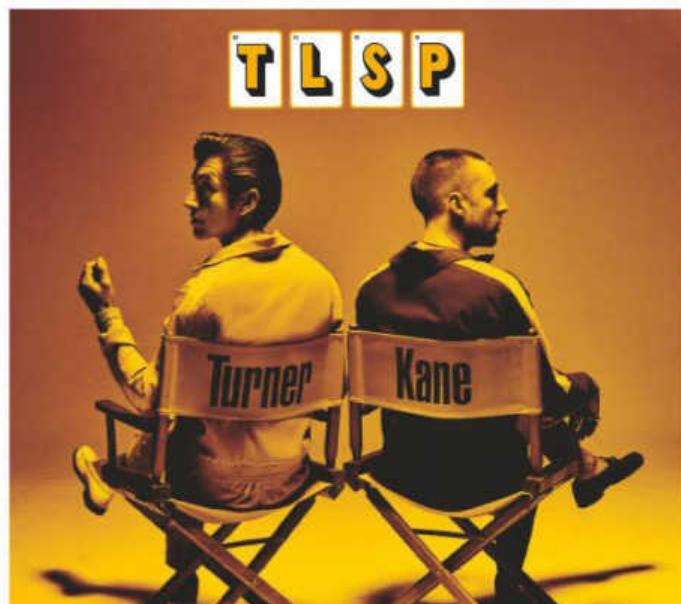
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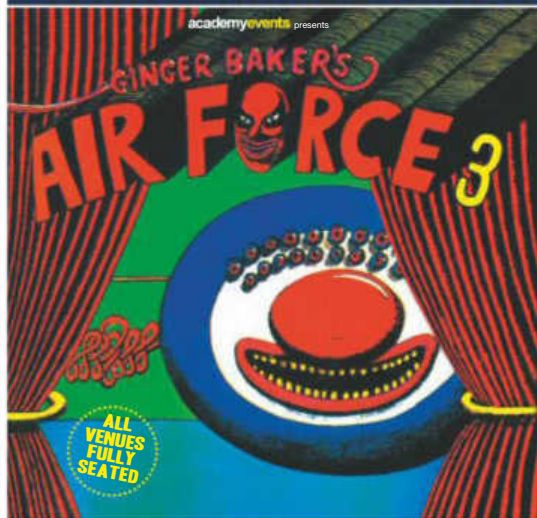
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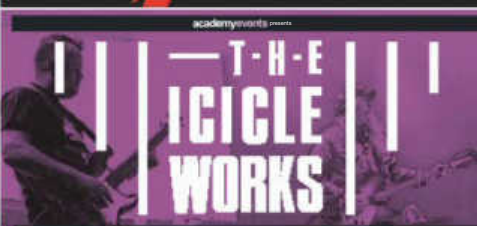
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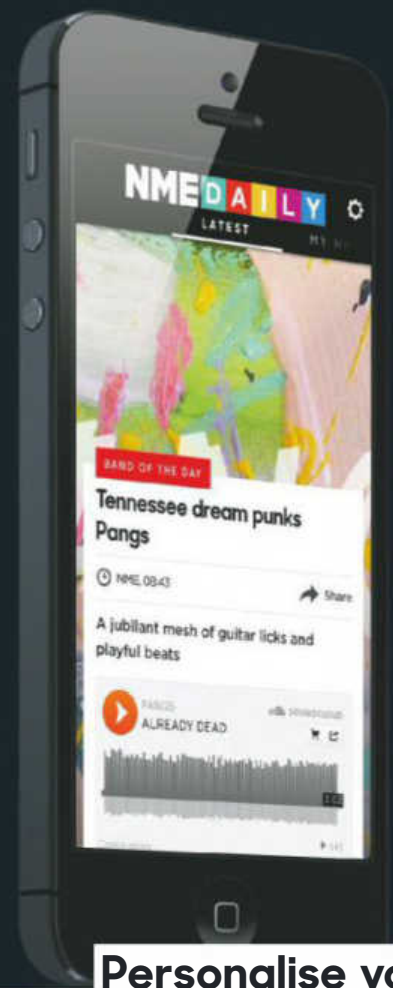
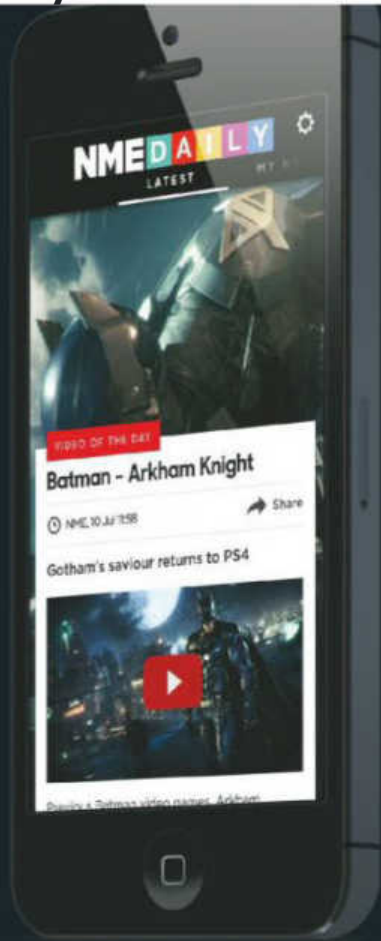
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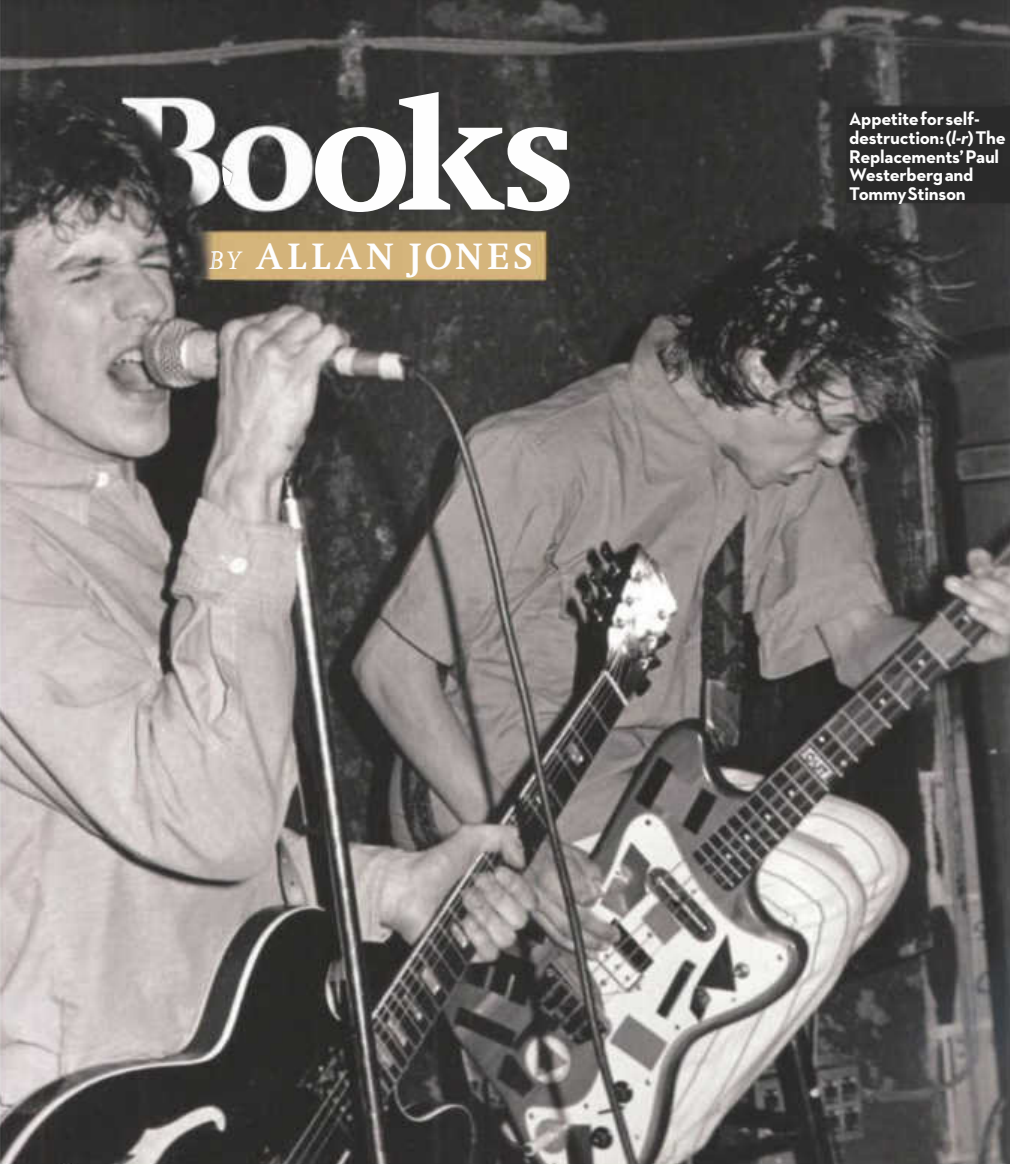
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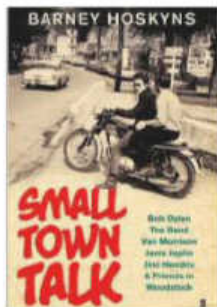
Appetite for self-destruction: (l-r) The Replacements' Paul Westerberg and Tommy Stinson



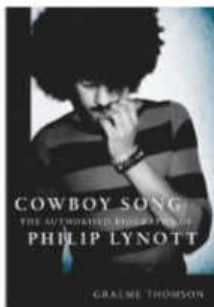
Reviewed this month...



Trouble Boys: The True Story Of The Replacements
Bob Mehr
DA CAPO
9/10



Small Town Talk: Bob Dylan, The Band, Van Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix & Friends In Woodstock
Barney Hoskyns
FABER
8/10



Cowboy Song: The Authorized Biography Of Philip Lynott
Graeme Thomson
CONSTABLE
7/10

WAS THERE EVER a band so utterly scared of success as The Replacements they effectively scuppered their own career? On the evidence of Bob Mehr's tremendous **Trouble Boys: The True Story Of The Replacements**, it seems unlikely. A bunch of reckless Minneapolis delinquents inspired by punk, fuelled by a legendary intake of drugs and alcohol and led by Paul Westerberg, the raw-voiced laureate of pre-grunge teenage nihilism, The Replacements could have been what REM became with *Green* and Nirvana and Pearl Jam became with *Nevermind* and *Ten*. Whatever opportunity they were offered, however, they abused, systematically and deliberately. They were endlessly needy, but

families with histories of mental illness, depression and suicide, high-school drop-outs with uncertain futures brought together by their love of rowdy rock'n'roll. Westerberg was a mass of insecurities with a pathological aversion to being told what to do, who feared rejection more than failure, which made him mock his own ambition and doubt his own talent. Guitarist Bob Stinson was physically and sexually abused by his stepfather, which accelerated the alcoholism, staggering drug abuse and mental-health problems that led first to his estrangement from the band he'd formed, then his early death. "He was such a broken kid at such a young age," says his half-brother Tommy, who, when he started on bass with The Replacements, was a cocky 12-year-old wise guy who sounded,

incapable of doing anything for themselves, except getting stoned and drunk, at which they were experts, no help needed there. When things went wrong, which they inevitably did, they turned on everyone around them. Managers, agents, producers, label brass were all bullied, humiliated, terrorised or sacked, most notably original champion Peter Jepsen. When the band turned on itself, things got even uglier.

What made them so dysfunctional? Their backgrounds had a lot to do with it. They were children of broken homes, alcoholic parents and

according to Westerberg, "like a little girl and played like a motherfucker".

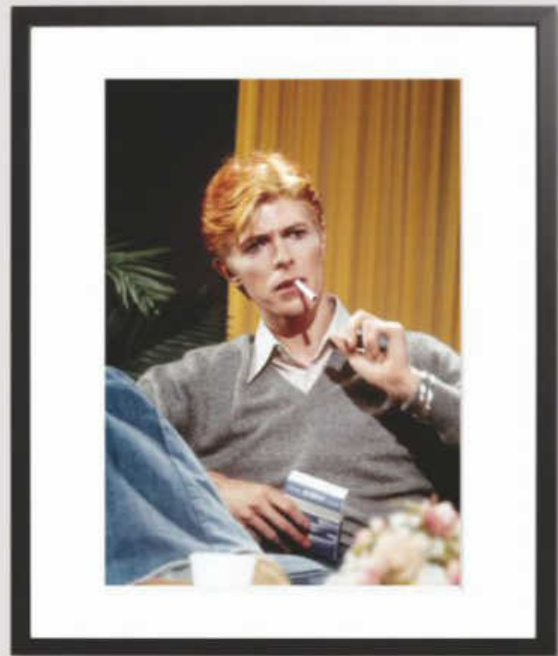
Mehr spent a decade piecing together this brilliant biography, which is full of hair-raising anecdotes, dozens of new interviews and much painfully frank, often hilarious commentary from Westerberg and Tommy Stinson. It's a gory story on most fronts, recalled in sometimes excruciating detail that takes us up to 2015's potentially lucrative reunion tour, which Westerberg abandoned a couple of days after two fraught shows at London's Roundhouse, a predictably unhappy ending to a career sometimes full of great music but more often dire disappointment.

➤ A decade after chronicling the LA music scene in *Hotel California*, Barney Hoskyns turns a wonderfully attentive eye to an equivalent late '60s East Coast music community that flourished in the Catskill Mountains of upper New York State, only hours from Manhattan. **Small Town Talk** is a history of the Woodstock scene that developed around Bob Dylan and his manager, Albert Grossman, who on a visit there in 1963 fell enough in love with the place to start buying large chunks of it, which over time would house restaurants, a theatre, the Bearsview recording complex.

There had been a rural arts colony in Woodstock since the early 1900s, bohemian types mixing as uneasily with the local townspeople as the Greenwich Village folkies who were already settling in when Grossman first blew into town, Woodstock becoming even more famous as a countercultural landmark after it gave its name to the 1969 festival that was actually held in Bethel, 60 miles away. This was too close for Dylan, who'd moved to Woodstock with his family in 1966, to recuperate from the drug-addled rigours of the world tour that had recently nearly killed him. By the end of the year, he was back in New York, his rural idyll shattered by intrusive fans. Because Dylan and Grossman are so central to the Woodstock narrative, the first third of the book is necessarily devoted to Dylan's retreat into bucolic family life, the arrival of The Hawks, soon to become The Band, the sessions that produced *The Basement Tapes* and subsequently The Band's *Music From Big Pink*, Dylan's motorcycle accident and his eventual falling-out with and split from Grossman. This is all familiar stuff, so it's a relief when Van Morrison turns up, followed by Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Todd Rundgren. The book takes off at this point, Woodstock's heyday fondly and colourfully remembered.

Good music continued to be made there after Dylan split, but by the early-'70s the place was swimming in cocaine and heroin, the tragic spoilers of the hippy dream, everyone left there as washed up as the town would soon become, Grossman's empire falling finally into ruin and neglect. Much as Woodstock declined when these stars either moved on or died, *Small Town Talk* is also diminished by their absence. You won't believe how much air goes out of the book when the local population seemingly dwindles to Marshall Crenshaw and Graham Parker.

➤ Graeme Thomson's **Cowboy Song: The Authorized Biography Of Philip Lynott** casts the tight-trousered former Thin Lizzy leader as a tragic romantic hero, a rock'n'roll wild man with a poet's soul, his troubled sensitivity obscured by a swashbuckling image and much macho posturing. Thomson risks the ridicule of Thin Lizzy agnostics, for whom the band was never more than boorish, but this is a genuinely sympathetic portrait. Thomson writes well about Lynott's illegitimate, mixed-race childhood in Manchester and Dublin, the Dublin's '60s bohemian scene that nurtured him and his early attempts to become the star he always believed himself to be and briefly was. Thin Lizzy were together for 13 years, but their heyday seems brief, their decline precipitous and personally humiliating, as Lynott's addictions – to booze, cocaine, whatever was going – escalated out of control and eventually killed him in 1986, his life by then in ruins.



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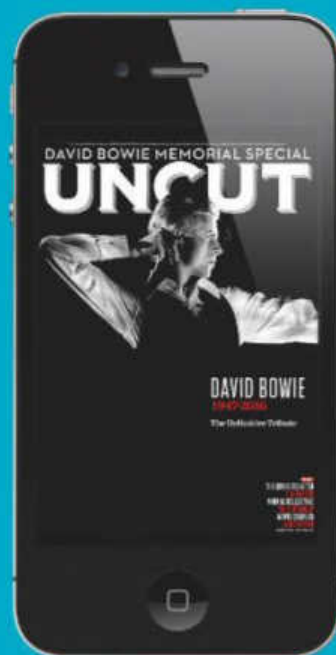
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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

PAUL KANTNER

Jefferson Airplane singer/guitarist
(1941-2015)

AS THE MOST durable member of Jefferson Airplane, Paul Kantner did more than anyone to preserve the band's remarkable legacy. The singer-guitarist helped detonate the acid-rock explosion of the '60s, co-creating the West Coast's signature sound and its lyrical preoccupations with sci-fi, politics and esoterica. When the Airplane split in 1972, Kantner and partner Grace Slick, dubbed "the psychedelic John and Yoko" by *Rolling Stone*, continued as Jefferson Starship. He remained the group's guiding force, give or take the odd sabbatical, for the next 40-plus years.

The only San Francisco native in the Airplane's core ranks, Kantner became fascinated with science fiction while at Jesuit military boarding school. He also developed a rebellious streak that fed directly into his ambition to emulate Pete Seeger as a folk-protest singer. A residency at San Francisco's Drinking Gourd led to Kantner hooking up with singer Marty Balin in the summer of 1965. Balin was forming a house band for his new club, The Matrix, upon which Kantner suggested bringing in guitarist Jorma Kaukonen, a friend from his days at San Jose College. The first meaningful iteration of Jefferson Airplane eventually fell into place with co-singer Signe Anderson (who died on the same day as Kantner – see page 119), drummer Skip Spence and bassist Jack Casady.

Kantner co-wrote four songs on 1966 debut LP *Jefferson Airplane Takes Off*, taking lead vocals on "Let Me In". With Anderson and Spence replaced by Grace Slick and Spencer Dryden, the following year's *Surrealistic Pillow* was a countercultural landmark that stood as the fullest expression yet of the Bay Area's bohemian new ideal. Kantner's creativity began to take fresh form too, most notably on "D.C.B.A.-25", which he described as "an LSD-inspired romp through consciousness".

By the end of 1967, with the release of *After Bathing At Baxter's*, he'd superseded Balin as the band's chief songwriter. One of the album's standouts was Kantner's "The Ballad Of You And Me And Pooneil", a trippy rocker with shining harmonies that referenced AA Milne and Fred Neil. His sci-fi sensibilities came to the fore on the title track of 1968's *Crown Of Creation*, inspired by John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*, while follow-up *Volunteers* was more politically charged. Of particular concern for their RCA bosses was Kantner's "We Can Be Together", whose lyrics borrowed from the Black Panthers' revolutionary maxim: "Up against the wall, motherfucker." The record also included the utopian vision of "Wooden Ships," co-written by Kantner with David Crosby and Stephen Stills.

During a lull in Airplane activity in 1970, Kantner, Slick and various high-profile chums recorded *Blows Against The Empire*, credited to Kantner and Jefferson Starship. His relationship with Slick, meanwhile, had become more than merely professional. Their daughter, China, was born in January '71. The pair cemented their union

Kantner: "the catalyst that made the alchemy happen"



with another couple of LPs, *Sunfighter*, and 1973's *Baron Von Tollbooth And The Chrome Nun*. Reunited with Balin two years later, Jefferson Starship's *Red Octopus* was a major success, nudged along by huge US hit, "Miracles."

Come the start of the '80s, and having broken up with Slick, Kantner was the only remaining original member. He carried on with assorted lineups until 1984, when he suddenly left mid-tour, arguing that the band had become too commercial. A subsequent court case over rights to the group's name resulted in his old cohorts being forced to truncate themselves to Starship.

Kantner and Balin resurrected Jefferson Starship in 1992, though the latter had dropped out by the time of their final album, 2008's *Jefferson's Tree Of Liberty*. Kantner continued to play with the group until his death from multiple organ failure and septic shock as the result of a heart attack. Paying tribute, Kaukonen remembered him fondly as "the catalyst that made the alchemy happen... His dedication to the Airplane's destiny as he saw it was undeniable."

He was the group's guiding force, give or take the odd sabbatical, for 40-plus years

OBITUARIES

MAURICE WHITE

Earth, Wind & Fire frontman

(1941-2016)

MAURICE WHITE FIRST discovered the kalimba, or African thumb piano, during his time as percussionist in The Ramsey Lewis Trio in the late '60s. The instrument's playful, melodious warmth was unveiled on 1969's *Another Voyage*, one of nine albums White recorded with the group, though it would go on to achieve much greater resonance in another project that he initiated that year. Teaming up with Chicago buddies Don Whitehead and Wade Flemons, White formed The Salty Peppers and secured a deal with Columbia. It would, however, require a change of location (Los Angeles) and name (Earth, Wind & Fire, in honour of White's astrological chart), as well as additional personnel, before they became a major commercial proposition.

Guided by White, who also acted as producer, Earth, Wind & Fire's exuberant synthesis of funk, jazz, R'n'B and gospel music served as soul's



Fire starter: EW&F founder Maurice White, with kalimba, live in Ontario, California, 1974

chief signifier throughout the '70s and early '80s. Much of their appeal was down to the contrasting voices of White and Philip Bailey (tenor and falsetto, respectively), allied to the infectious rhythms of the kalimba and brass section, the Phenix Horns. Earth, Wind & Fire racked up more than 90 million sales and won six Grammys, fuelled by such mega-hits as "Shining Star", "After The Love Has Gone" and "Let's Groove". Inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2000, White used the occasion to reveal he'd been suffering from Parkinson's disease for the best part of a decade, a condition that had led to him opting out of touring in 1994. He did, nevertheless, continue to have executive control over the band.

Having begun his professional life as a session drummer at Chess Records, backing blues royalty like Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy and Etta James, White enjoyed further success as a hired hand during his heyday. In 1976 he and Charles Stepney co-produced *This Is Niecy*, the debut from Deniece Williams, which yielded a UK No 1 in the

shape of "Free". Williams would go on to make four more albums for White's Kalimba Productions. He also oversaw recordings by The Emotions (among them the Earth, Wind & Fire collaboration "Boogie Wonderland"), Barbra Streisand, Atlantic Starr and Neil Diamond.

GEORGE ROSE/GETTY IMAGES; JEREMY FLETCHER/REDFERNS



Stones/Yardbirds promoter Gomelsky in 1964

GIORGIO GOMELSKY

Crawdaddy Club owner and impresario

(1934-2016)

IN ACCORDING TO THE ROLLING STONES, Keith Richards remembered Giorgio Gomelsky as "a dedicated non-conformist... really good at organising and making something of the Stones, even though it was still on a very small scale. Giorgio was the one who focused it..." Under Gomelsky's patronage, in 1963 the Stones secured a weekly residency at the Crawdaddy, an R'n'B club that he ran from the back room of Richmond's Station Hotel. It was from there that the Stones' legend swiftly grew, partly thanks to Gomelsky's promotional gimmick of offering punters two entries for the price of one. Among those who poured in was teenager Andrew Loog Oldham, who promptly took over the band's promotional and managerial duties.

The Crawdaddy Club nevertheless continued to grow, moving to a new location up the road and replacing the Stones with another new house band, The Yardbirds. Perhaps mindful of the Stones experience, Gomelsky was more hands-on this time, renting them a flat in Kew, sending them out on tour with Sonny Boy Williamson and brokering a record deal with Columbia. In addition, he produced the group's 1964 debut, *Five Live Yardbirds*. It was an association that lasted until 1966, with Gomelsky also helming classic 45s such as "Shapes Of Things" and "Evil Hearted You".

He subsequently started his own label, Marmalade Records, which served as a stable for Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger, The Blossom Toes and, prefiguring 10cc, a fledgling outfit that included Graham Gouldman, Kevin Godley and Lol Creme. Gomelsky recorded The Soft Machine's early demos, too, managed Steampacket (featuring a young Rod Stewart) and produced John McLaughlin's 1969 debut, *Extrapolation*. By the '70s he was working with prog outfits Gong and Magma, before relocating to New York, where he set up his own studio in Chelsea.

Born in the Soviet Union and raised in Italy and Switzerland, Gomelsky was a visionary who was initially drawn to Britain by the thriving jazz scene of the '50s. "Flamboyant, worldly and a *bon vivant*," was how ex-Yardbird Eric Clapton described him in his self-titled autobiography, adding that Gomelsky "had a fantastic ear for talent. He did an incredible amount of work for the early English R'n'B scene."

DALE 'BUFFIN' GRIFFIN

Mott The Hoople drummer

(1948-2016)

DALE GRIFFIN ONCE suggested that he was drawn to the music business against his own better judgement. "Before I became a professional musician everything warned against doing anything like that," he explained. "Music hypnotises you and perhaps against your will you must do it."

Ultimately though, it was a decision he never came to regret. As the powerfully agile drummer of Mott The Hoople, Griffin rode the band's ascent from '60s cult rockers to '70s glam superstars. And, despite the onset of the Alzheimer's disease that eventually claimed his life, he was able to savour Mott's unexpected renaissance in later years, when they reunited for a series of 40th-anniversary gigs in 2009.

Griffin and friend Overend Watts started out in local bands as teenagers in Ross-on-Wye. By 1968 they were both gigging in The Shakedown Sound, soon to become Silence, augmented by guitarist Mick Ralphs and keyboard player Verden Allen. A move to London the following year coincided with an introduction to Island's record producer Guy Stevens, who changed their name to Mott The Hoople and auditioned a new singer, Ian Hunter. The band's riotous early shows, in which their chaotic rock'n'roll was grounded by the forceful rhythm section of Griffin and Watts, brought them a small, fiercely devoted fanbase.

Alas, this didn't translate into record sales. Frustrations reached a head in March 1972, when Griffin and Hunter traded blows onstage in Switzerland. With the band supposedly on the verge of splitting, David Bowie provided a

lifeline with "All The Young Dudes." The song became their breakthrough hit, soon followed by the likes of "All The Way From Memphis" and "Roll Away The Stone".

Hunter's departure in 1974 led to Griffin and Watts reconfiguring a fresh lineup as Mott, finally morphing into British Lions. The band fizzled to a halt at the end of the decade, after which Griffin and Watts founded a production company and oversaw Hanoi Rocks' *Back To Mystery City* and the 1980 Department S hit, "Is Vic There?"

Between 1980 and 1993, Griffin produced nearly 2,000 sessions for BBC Radio One, among them Pulp's professional debut and an early Nirvana set that eventually surfaced on 1992's *Incesticide*.

Griffin in Basing Street Studios, August 10, 1971



SIGNE ANDERSON

Jefferson Airplane vocalist

(1941-2016)

Signe Anderson's tenure with Jefferson Airplane lasted only a year, but she left a lasting impression. Bandmate Jack Casady recalled her rich contralto voice and "wonderful tone", while Jorma Kaukonen called her "an important member of our dysfunctional little family". Anderson gravitated to San Francisco from Portland in the early '60s, where she sang at folk hangout The Drinking Gourd. Recruited by Paul Kantner and Marty Balin, her appropriation of Memphis Minnie's "Chaffeur Blues" was a highlight of 1966

debut LP, *Jefferson Airplane Takes Off*. She quit in October that year, returning to Oregon to become a full-time mother. Anderson also sang with Carl Smith And The Natural Gas Company, and made sporadic appearances with Jefferson Starship and Hot Tuna over the decades.

ELSE MARIE PADE

Electronic music innovator

(1924-2016)

Else Marie Pade was Denmark's foremost pioneer of electronic scores and musique concrète, beginning in 1954 with *A Day At Bakken*. A contemporary of French composers Pierre Boulez and Pierre Schaeffer, former German POW Pade went on to create experimental works such as 1958's *Seven Circles* and *Symphonie Magnetophonique*, an epic piece using found sounds and street noise to describe everyday life in Copenhagen. She also made regular trips to the Darmstadt

school during the '60s, where she studied under Stockhausen. Much like UK counterpart Delia Derbyshire, Pade went unacknowledged for most of her life, though she collaborated with Danish sound artist Jacob Kirkegaard on 2013's *Svaevninger* and, a year later, saw the release of a career overview, *Electronic Works 1958-1995*.

MIC GILLETTE

Tower Of Power trumpeter

(1951-2016)

Tower Of Power emerged from the Oakland club scene of the late '60s to become one of America's most lauded funk bands. Central to their sound was a robust brass section featuring first trumpeter Mic Gillette, who was equally adept at trombone, flugelhorn and tuba. The son of Tommy Dorsey's old trombonist Ray Gillette, he was a powerful presence from 1970 debut *East Bay Grease* through to 1984, a time span that included a couple of *Billboard* Top 30 hits in "You're Still A Young Man" and "So Very Hard To Go". The band also toured with The Rolling Stones, Santana,

CCR and Rod Stewart. Gillette went on to play with The Sons Of Champlin before rejoining Tower Of Power in 2009.

DAN HICKS

Hot Licks singer-songwriter

(1941-2016)

In the wake of his most successful album, 1973's *Last Train To Hicksville*, Dan Hicks broke up his band. It was an illustration of the peculiar logic that would define his working life. Originally the drummer in Bay Area acid-rockers The Charlatans, he quit to form Dan Hicks And His Hot Licks in 1967. Hicks called them "folk jazz", a reductive label that failed to grasp their sweeping assimilation of country, Western swing, bluegrass, jazz and roots music. His aversion to being a bandleader led to a 22-year exile from recording (during which time he played with the Acoustic Warriors), before Hicks returned with the Hot Licks for 2000's *Beatin' The Heat*, featuring Tom Waits, Elvis Costello and Rickie Lee Jones.

ROBHUGHES



Ready for takeoff: Signe Anderson and the band, 1965

Feedback...

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“THAT’S THE MESSAGE THAT I SENT”

Comfort has been hard to find, as a Bowie fan, in these last two weeks. It took me five days to steel myself to read David Cavanagh’s wonderful piece [*Uncut*, March issue, Take 226], having wept in my kitchen over John Mulvey’s opening note and put the mag into the corner for when I was ready. The outpouring of, as he called it, “grief and chaos” did not surprise me in the least. My closest friend, who lectures in music technology, and who I met on BowieNet, told me a week after his passing that it felt like her fandom and dedication had been vindicated, as everyone else now understands why we love him as we do, because they’re starting to see it also (including her teenage students, who are discovering his music for the first time with wide-eyed amazement).

I am now beyond grateful for that time we spent in New York in December, taking two chances (December 9 and 10) to see the remarkable and moving *Lazarus*, a tale of redemption and farewell, while other friends given to us by BowieNet waited outside the theatre on press night (December 7), witnessing his final public appearance. I’d felt unsure about the play until I saw the photos of his face that night, smiling and content, and I knew that he knew he’d done it. He was right to be so pleased with the play and album, and through my grief, I can see that *Blackstar* was a gift that would help us cope with his loss. Even more so, you simply have to admire the audaciousness of the way he went out. He orchestrated the greatest rock death of all time. What else would you expect? He changed my life in real, tangible ways. I will miss him so very much, but fortunately, music lives forever.

Liz Tray, London

“JAZZIN’ FOR BLUE JEAN”

I have just read your magazine’s tribute to David Bowie [*Uncut*, March issue]. I noticed a ‘share your memories’, and thought, well, why not? I was lucky enough to work with my very own hero. In the ‘80s I was a model/dancer and was cast in the video shoot for “Blue Jean”. It was shot over a couple of days at



Bowie on the catwalk in the “Jazzin’ For Blue Jean” video

The Wag Club, in Chinatown, London. During the filming we all, some 15 dancers, got used to DB walking around us and chatting. At one point, late on the first day, another dancer and I had been placed by a catwalk, that was to feature in the video, for a lighting call. DB sat, guitar in hand, with us. There was noise all around the club as film crew rushed around, setting up for the next shot. He said, “Shall I sing something?” I, forgetting myself, gushed, “Ooh, you couldn’t sing ‘Life On Mars’ could you – it’s my favourite?” He laughed, and he did. He created a memory that has lasted a lifetime.

Mandy Komlosy, via email

...I used to be a regular at The Strawbs’ Folk Club, at The White Bear Pub in Hounslow, 1969, on Monday nights, I think. One night, Dave Cousins introduced a young singer performing his new song “Space Oddity”, for the first time in public. David Bowie, replete with crinkly blond hair and Afghan coat, appeared armed only with an acoustic guitar: a performance that has stayed with me to this day.

Nigel Mill, via email

FURTHER REASON TO BELIEVE

I enjoyed Graeme Thomson’s story on Tim Hardin [*Uncut*, March issue]. As for the “essential albums” – believe it or not the best Tim Hardin

record is *The Homecoming Concert*, recorded in his hometown of Eugene, Oregon in 1980, just months before Tim died. Remarkably he was in fine voice, and playing great. I love these stories on the lost heroes of folk-rock, but one man who deserves attention, and is still with us, is Steve Young who, along with Gram Parsons, was an architect of both country rock and outlaw music in the 1960s and early ‘70s with his records on A & M and RCA. Steve had a recent fall and deserves a nod.

Tom Russell, Santa Fe, New Mexico

IN DEFENCE OF A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS

I think that Sid Griffin, in your Archive feature [*Uncut*, March issue], is being a little unfair to the music scene that The Long Ryders emerged into in the early 1980s. As far as I remember it wasn’t all A Flock Of Seagulls, Haircut 100 and “watered-down dance music”. I recall a vibrant indie scene on both sides of the Atlantic and in the UK; even groups like The Associates and Bauhaus could dent the mainstream charts. Despite my personal preference for The Fall and The Cravats at the time, I always had a sneaking regard for the catchy pop of A Flock Of Seagulls’ “I Ran” and Haircut 100’s “Love Plus One”. Desperately

uncool though both groups were – no fringes, Cuban heels and studied Byrds-like poses here – at least they were of their time and weren’t pretending it was 1966.

Jon Wakeham, via email

200 GREATEST ALBUMS? “LAUGHABLE!”

Come on, the title of this article [*The 200 Greatest Albums Of All Time*, *Uncut*, February 2016] is laughable. If this was as stated, where are the blues and rock’n’roll albums, *Graceland*, Tim Buckley, *Band On The Run*, Elvis, Elton John, etc? The Fall, The Slits, two of The Velvet Underground, The Clash and The Smiths should all come out and be replaced by music that deserves to be in a Top 200. This was written by a bunch of (mostly) youngish writers trying to impress you with their scanty knowledge of music over the past 40 years.

Alan Mitchell, via email

...I have been buying albums since 1967 but only have five of your 200 choices. Hopefully other readers who also have such poor taste may be a little relieved to hear that this lack of judgement is not entirely their fault. A list without *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* [sic] cannot be taken too seriously. We all have our own favourites, so feel proud with whatever collection you have. My 50 best albums would include Steve Harley, Richie Havens, numerous ‘70s soul groups, Bobby Womack, Sam Dees, Keni Stevens, Nina Simone, Melanie, BeBe & CeCe Winans, Lil Louis and Neil Diamond! All overlooked by your contributors, apart from the Isleys’ sole entry.

John Burton, via email

...Really? Not one Elvis Presley album? Really? Idiots.

Gary L Wilson, via email

WHITHER ELTON?

Among your choices for the list of 200 albums, you could not find a single space for even one Elton John album? I understand the British music press has never forgiven Reg for having to leave the United Kingdom to become, almost instantly, the biggest rock star in the world during the 1970s. Even though Elton was right under your

noses before he crossed the Atlantic, the British music press paid him little praise or attention. It's been 46 years... get over it, guys. While you were busy hyping Marc Bolan, Elton John conquered the world – without your blessing. And that petty grudge still continues as those same rock journalists of the past are now the rock historians of the present. A list of 200 of the “greatest” rock albums, and obvious Elton John contenders including *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy* or *Tumbleweed Connection* don't make the grade? Meanwhile your list over-represents several artists (David Bowie... seven albums?) and pretentiously includes some albums that delight in the general obscurity. Elton's only sin has been to write and perform a litany of best-selling albums and mega-popular hit songs loved by millions for almost five decades. Elton John is an artist who so loves his mother country, who never left it to fashionably become a tax exile like so many of his peers, and who only strived to be accepted by the English music scene. But despite an endearing, enduring recorded and performing career, he remains disrespected despite unquestioned talent and unparalleled accomplishments. Shame. Shame. Shame.

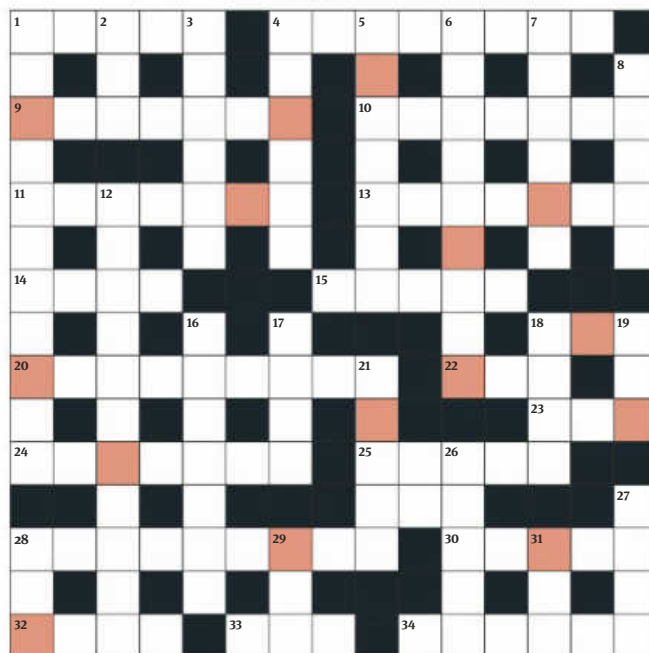
James Turano, Chicago, USA

AND FINALLY...

Solipsism is the self-centred belief that the world revolves exclusively around you. I am reminded of this when people invariably write in when lists are published to complain about how a particular album/artist has been excluded. They fail to grasp the simple reason is that others have completely different tastes and are not overly interested in what theirs are.

My main doubt about the 200 Greatest Albums is the logistics of achieving any credible ranking system, given that the 57 people involved would have such disparate choices and that total must be in the thousands. Clearly, greatness in the eyes of this esteemed panel does not equate with popularity, as evidenced by the fact that two LPs that achieved No 1 status in both the UK and US (*Thriller* and *Harvest*) both languish surprisingly in the high 100s. Moreover, two other mega-selling albums that might be expected to be in the lists of the buying public are not even featured – *Hotel California* and *Brothers In Arms* (nor are any of these artists' other albums). And 22 of the albums never even featured in either chart.

David M, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Bruce Springsteen. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* April 2016 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: **Monday, March 21, 2016**. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1+4A** A new album from Suede?
In your dreams (5-8)
9 Rufus Wainwright not satisfied until he got this follow-up album (4-3)
10 (See 1 down)
11 (See 26 down)
13 Ian Lane arrangement of album by Mike Bloomfield (7)
14 US '60s girl group who had hit with "A Lover's Concerto" (4)
15 "Don't Turn Around" when '80s number one hit-makers appear (5)
18 With which Paul McCartney should have had a good solid hit in album chart (3)
20 "_____ drifting through the back yard/_____ taking off her dress," 1986 (3-3-3)
22 Having a bit of a chin wag regarding hip hop (3)
23 Earth, Wind & Fire album recorded in Miami (1-2)
24 Could somehow Nelly do work as Tanya? (7)
25+4D Former Procol Harum guitarist who went solo over the "Bridge Of Sighs" (5-6)
28 "I'd move to _____ tomorrow, and I'd build my house, baby, with sorrow," Duffy (9)
30 "If everybody had an _____ across the USA, then everybody'd be surfen', like Californi-a," The Beach Boys (5)
32 The Kinks doing time (4)
33+34A The Kinks on release (3-2-4)

ANSWERS: TAKE 225

1 Blackstar, 6+17D Man Of The World, 9 Hell Freezes Over, 10 Nirvana, 13 Luka, 14 Knives Out, 18+8D Hudson Ford, 20 Charlene, 21 Night, 22 Wire, 25 Devo, 27 Tom Rush, 28+20D

Ray Charles, 29 Rave On, 31 Era, 32 Darkness.

DOWN

1+4D Behind The Mask, 2+33A All Around My Hat, 3 KLF, 5 Razorlight, 6 Music, 7 Never For Ever, 11 Avalon, 15 Earl,

CLUES DOWN

- 1+10A** Some fresh clobber from Ian Dury (3-5-3-7)
2 "I'd like to talk about that/Talkover _____ in teacups" from Babyshambles "Albion" (3)
3 Rory Gallagher album featuring military music? (6)
4 (See 25 across)
5 Kids there's also "Bawlers, Brawlers & Bastards" on this Tom Waits' album (7)
6 Patti Smith has left us once more with an album (4-5)
7+16D "And you're singing the songs thinking _____", 2007 (4-2-3-4)
8 "Now watch me rise up and leave all the _____ you made out of me," Embrace (5)
12 "Try and laugh about it, hiding the tears in my eyes, because _____", 1986 (4-4-3)
16 (See 7 down)
17 The Kooks had different ways to move (4)
18 "Words are flowing out like endless _____ into a paper cup" from The Beatles' "Across The Universe" (4)
19 "I know it might be wrong, but I'm in love with Stacy's _____," The Fountains Of Wayne (4)
21 Indie band The Paddingtons regret bringing this single out (5)
26+11A Billy Bragg more than man enough to release outtakes from previous album (5-2-5)
27 Roy Harper studio album taken from a concert (4)
28 Inspired in the end by music from The Guillemots (3)
29 Tommy _____, his hits include "The Folk Singer" (3)
31 The _____ Band, opening act for the Rolling Stones' 1969 Hyde Park concert (3)

16+12A The Boy Racer, 19 Nixon, 23 River, 24 Islam, 26 Vault, 27 Torn, 30 Wah.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"She's In Fashion"

XWORD COMPILED BY:
Trevor Hungerford

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Bobby Gillespie

How Primal Scream's insurrectionist frontman learned to take sides, via his dad's Johnny Cash records...



A childhood favourite

Johnny Cash

A Boy Named Sue 1969

We had this single, with the B-side, "San Quentin", and we used to play it again and again. We would sit with our dad and play "A Boy Named Sue" and fall about laughing.

And then we'd put on "San Quentin" and we loved it. When he says "San Quentin, may you rot and burn in hell" and all the fucking prisoners go "Yeaahh!!", me and my brother used to go "Yeaahh!!" We were taking sides at a very early age.



My glam rock awakening

The Sweet

Blockbuster 1973

My parents would play Dylan, Ray Charles or Hank Williams while I was playing with my fucking Action Man or whatever, but the music I first really became aware of was glam rock. I fucking love The Sweet. I remember someone at school telling me Brian Connolly had lived in Hampden Terrace, the next street from mine. I walked up and down it thinking, 'Where did he live, where did he live...?' But he was long gone.



An album that took punk to a new level

Siouxsie & The Banshees

The Scream 1978

Punk was so high-energy, but it had to go somewhere else and quickly, and the first record to really do that was *The Scream*. That lineup has been a huge influence on us, even the way Kenny Morris played drums. I was fortunate enough to see *The Scream* tour – the first song was "Helter Skelter", and their version was like if Charlie Manson had covered "Helter Skelter"; it's like a Death Valley fucking special, Death Valley blues.



A rediscovered post-punk classic

Au Pairs

Playing With A Different Sex 1981

As much as I'm influenced by punk, musically it's post-punk that is important to me. Recently I've been listening again to this LP. Fucking hell, man, it really has influenced me. They wrote songs about Armagh, internment, the coldness of dysfunctional relationships, writing about sex in a cold and detached way. It was feminist post-punk. They've got that funk thing the Gang Of Four had, but maybe, I think, the songs are better.



The early Scream's musical bible

Public Image Limited

Metal Box 1979

When Primal Scream started, Jim Beattie played one chord while I hit trash cans and screamed. Two years before the Mary Chain we were screaming in this school hall Jim's mum had the keys to. We used to beat dents in the ventilation shafts with our fists. It was heavily influenced by PiL. Their first three LPs are like bibles. For punk you had three chords, but if you couldn't play, you could still form an inventive post-punk band.



A song that inspired the Mary Chain

Dale Hawkins

Susie-Q 1957

Because the '80s were so fucking bad for rock, we were all listening to the '60s. William Reid repeatedly played me "Susie-Q" by Dale Hawkins in his bedroom, discussing and analysing it. I thought it was a Creedence song, but then he played me the Hawkins version. It's totally mindblowing. No-one had ever ripped music apart to me the way William did. He was ahead of the game, the way he looked at music.



A recent, Factory-inspired favourite

LoneLady

Hinterland 2015

I really love this record. Julie Campbell is doing her own thing, but the way she plays guitar really reminds me sometimes of Bernard Sumner on the first New Order album. The whole album is very early New Order, you know, those first few singles. It's kind of scratchy, but she's definitely got her own style – it's very early Factory Records, which I love. I really loved *Hinterland*, and listened to it a lot last year.



A socialist, synth masterpiece

Gwenno

Y Dydd Olaf 2014

I love Gwenno's album. I can't pronounce the title, but in English it's 'The Last Day'. It's one of the albums I played the most last year. They were playing it a lot on BBC 6 Music, and Andrew Innes from Primal Scream emailed me the video and said, "This is really cool." I think she's fairly left-wing, and came from a socialist background. There are some amazing synth sounds on it, but she's also a fucking good singer... very strong.

Primal Scream's *Chaosmosis* is released by Ignition Records on March 18. The band's UK tour begins at Aberdeen Beach Ballroom on March 29

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